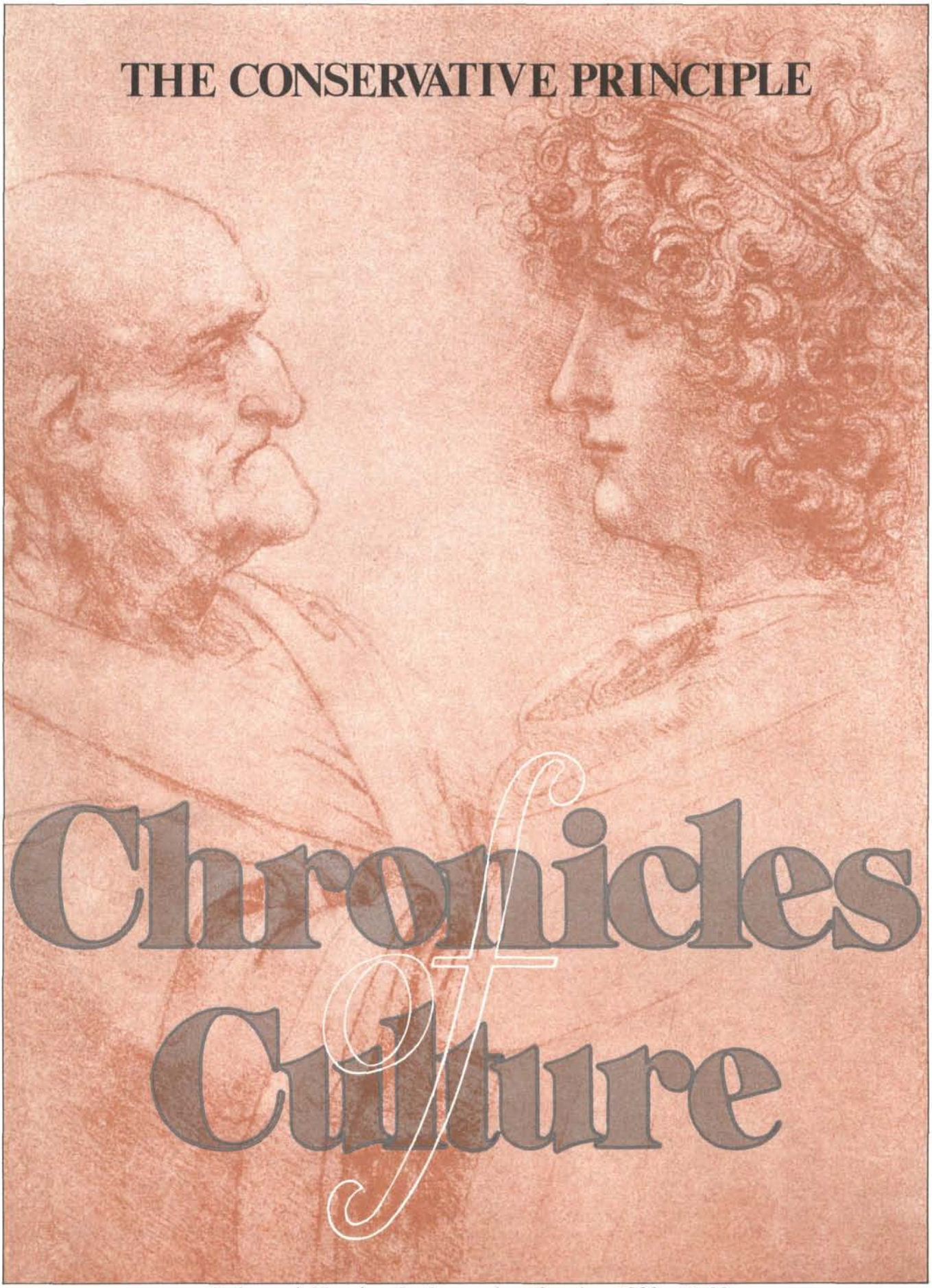
THE CONSERVATIVE PRINCIPLE



Chronicles of Culture

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The Conservative Principle

May Freedom's oak for ever live
With stronger life from day to day;
That man's the true Conservative
Who lops the molder'd branch away.

TENNYSON
Hands All Around

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Editor's Comment

1.

The grand show of our lifetime is the half-a-century-old debate about the American promise and American power—and what we have done to and with both. Soon after World War II, something clicked in the American culture, and, ever since, Americans have been supposed to react mentally only to preordained liberal stimuli. Academia, the opinion-shaping industries and Hollywood have joined forces toward this goal. In short order, promise and power ceded to an all-engulfing disputation on American (but no other) sin. Actually, it was no longer a polemics: the endless variety and inventiveness of accusations and condemnations had come to be termed a dispute. By the middle of the 60's, the national confabulation had been so constructed that *only* American sin was allowed to be discussed in conjunction with American power. Why so, one may ask, and allowed by whom? With the passing of time, these questions become less and less possible to answer. There certainly are powers in 20th-century America which are capable of obscuring the national consciousness to a degree which would be envied by totalitarian rulers, and they can easily eclipse in people's minds anything those powers prefer not to deliberate on.

A conservative is, by nature, inclined to ponder sin. What distinguishes his from other persuasions is that, in the case of *our* national debate, he also proposes to consider American virtues. So far, few have wanted to listen to him. However, those who still insist that American sin is the only thing wrong with the world still command the national culture. And they prefer to hate rather than to discuss.

2.

By now, the American conservative seems eagerly willing to ventilate his views on all three subjects: power, promise and sin. What's disturbing is that no one wants to argue with him seriously. Perhaps this is because his argument now, after 50-odd years of liberal dominance in culture, has more strength than ever. Taking this circumstance into consideration, he is either accorded shallow accolades for his political acumen, or he is called names.

3.

Ours is a marvelous country. It's so suspiciously easy to obtain recognition and acclaim here, and no less suspiciously simple to be instantly rejected and forgotten. Dispensing attention and oblivion is a very idiosyncratic, genuinely American mechanism. I have always wondered why de Tocqueville failed to mention this. How could he have missed the supreme and poetic justice inherent in this phenomenon? People, ideas, which idea belongs to whom, tend to be so utterly and universally obliterated from the American memory bank that, in the end, equity is meted out to everybody.

However, justice in America does not imply impartiality, especially in our time. Which, of course, exonerates de Tocqueville. Anyway, he would have had great difficulty in publishing *Democracy in America* during the 60's and 70's. After all, his was a famously enlightened conservative impulse, easily detectable by every New York editor. He would have read rejection slips like: "Dear Tocq (or Dear de)—it was quite thoughtless on your part to have sent us your Ms. Who's going to pay to read about America's phony virtues?" In a little-known speech prepared for the *l'Academie des Sciences Morales et Politiques* and published in its *Seances et Travaux* in 1852, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote:

> It is incredible how many systems of ethics and politics have been successfully found, forgotten, found again and forgotten again, only to make a fresh appearance later on, always enchanting or astonishing the world as if they were quite new, bearing witness to men's ignorance, not to the inventiveness of the human mind.
>
> It would perhaps be permissible to apply to the moral and political sciences, what Madame de Sévigné so pleasingly said about love, that it is a great reviver *(recommenceur).* For moral and political philosophers often repeat what has been said before in a different way. They present very few truths that are not extremely old, and very few errors which, were their date of birth known, would not appear thoroughly decrepit. That is why most of those who spin social theories nowadays, who justly strike us as so dangerous, would also seem very boring if we had more erudition and better memories.

An American conservative who understands these words and is aware of their perspicacity knows why he is a conservative and where he is going. Because, in our day, conservatism means a method of thinking concerned more with structuring the future than with extolling the past.

4.

What the official American culture, on the threshold of the 1980's, stubbornly refuses to accept is that American conservatism is a profoundly intellectual movement of ideas whose primary task is to probe the foundations of our moral and existential dilemmas. As such, it may be better suited than any other philosophy to penetrate the enigmas of the future.

What's even more ignored is that American conservatism is rational and democratic, otherwise it wouldn't be American. It nurses a deeply ingrained contempt for, and a defense against, fanaticism. Curiously enough, the most implacable enemies of conservatism in today's America are those who are fanatically involved with ideas that have already been

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proved rationally and empirically wrong. The contemporary conservative is a descendant of Whig liberalism, whose coat of arms was antiabsolutism—in thinking, political conduct, social affairs. In point of fact, so is the contemporary liberal. However, the latter has perverted Whiggism and corrupted it with European doctrines of moral coercion. As things stand now, the American liberal is firmly dedicated to the idea that justice, freedom, equality, etc., must be prescribed by him, by a social class trained in devotion to his principles; otherwise those notions have no value, either moral or social. He does not associate freedom with the right of others to have concepts of justice and compassion which are different from his and which may be as valuable as his. Not even a century ago, he waged a cruel war against laissez-faire economy. Today, he preaches a nonnegotiable behavioral laissez-faireism, claiming that it's immoral not to let anyone demand or do whatever he wants, regardless of the social consequences of his desires and requests. He champions anyone's right to live his own way, but not to think his own way. The modern liberal reserves for himself the exclusive right to prescribe thinking and to implement it socially. As a born-again absolutist, he sees government as a reliable tool for his designs, providing it's *his* government—any other government is considered an abuse of decency and a source of corruption. He cares little whether his government expresses the will of the majority—except when it expresses *his* version of justice, freedom, equality and so on, government is something one should distrust. However, once the government begins to impose *his* ideas upon human existences and destinies—ideas concocted in *his* ideological laboratories and enforced by *his* bureaucracy—the contemporary American liberal sees life as better, full of decency and dignity.

The conservative principle is antiabsolutist. The American conservative abides by a political legitimacy which originates from the democratic process. He thus accepts with magnanimity the wild intellectual antics of the liberal, who only recently so vehemently denounced laissez-faireism, and who now so adamantly demands it. He just thinks such inconsistency is deeply indecent. He tries to overcome this indecency by appealing to man's common sense, and he believes that a lawful and free society will adjust errors with the help of the ballot. Time is on his side, an ally of the conservative mode of thinking. The conservative trusts time and its ability to preserve and protect values; he knows how to make a truce with time and to use it wisely. Those who call themselves progressives are in conflict, or a constant race, with time, perennially uncertain whether time will confirm their speculative hopes. To a conservative, time is neither a competitor nor a lottery nor a depository for his expectations. It is the safest shelter for his principle. The conservative idea, that success in history consists not in rushing things but in always insisting on their correctness, induces the liberal to hurl insults at the conservative—among which "indifference" and "insensitivity" are the most benign.

5.

The world today is what it is—and many of us tend to suspect, rightly or wrongly, that it is worse than it was before, even if "before" merely means our own memory—because of ideas. Most of those ideas can be credited to three historical personages: Rousseau, Marx and Freud.

Marx came to the conclusion that human economic activities could be motivated and administered by instincts other than the property instinct. Freud (or if not he himself then the myriad of interpreters who distorted his message) made many of us believe that all the ills of the world were located in that part of our soul which deals with ourselves, and therefore putting our own psyche above all other aspects of life would make life better. Finally, the idea that society is the source of our fate, actually an ancient notion, was given contemporary substance and shape by Rousseau. His capricious toying with notions like freedom, natural goodness and authority led his successors to proclaim that all we had to do for ourselves was to free our natural impulses and engineer our society to accommodate our propensities.

In this respect, burping at the dinner table, depriving someone of the fruit of his labor in order to satisfy someone else's needs, even copulating in public, seem to be cogent

continued on page 41

Poetry in America

Poetry was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind . . .

—Francis Bacon, 1605

Not these days. In our time, it is supposed to erect other things. The liberal media prostrate themselves before what they call rock poetry. The national magazines devote pages of obsequiously reverent treatises to it. In its Arts/Books section, the *Chicago Tribune* publishes its samples every Sunday. Here are a few lines from a rock poem by a major rock poetess, Deborah Harry, known better in rock-poetry circles and salons under her group's literary sobriquet "Blondie":

Uh huh make me tonight
tonight make it right . . .
tonight right
Oh your hair is beautiful
Oh tonight
Atomic

Rilke and Yeats are, on occasion, also mentioned in the *Chicago Tribune* as poets . . . right? □

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That Hollow Core

Richard Sennett: *Authority;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Edward J. Lynch

Within what used to be called Western Civilization philosophers have developed two justifications for authority. Broadly construed, they are explanations based upon revelation and explanations based upon reason.

The Bible is the most profound statement of the tradition of revelation known to Western people, but the Bible offers little prospect for developing governing practices among people. For reasons that He alone can fathom, the Creator has chosen to reveal Himself to different people in different ways. Locke's doctrine of toleration was developed to mitigate the tensions between those who claimed particular versions of The Word as definitive. However dimly we perceive the intentions of the Almighty, few of us are willing to resurrect the holy wars that perpetually have been associated with attempts to govern people according to some version of the revealed Word.

The Socratic dialogues offer the most profound statement of the tradition of reason available to us. They, too, offer little hope for the peaceful rule of some people by others. Socrates, however ironic, was a most ungovernable soul. Indeed, his persistent questioning tended to undermine all claims to authority, except the claim of the wise to rule the unwise. Democracies have serious difficulties with this form of authority because wisdom is not always communicable to those who are less than wise, which is to say the majority. The wise critic always poses a challenge to that majority. As the Athenians demonstrated with Socrates, the resolution of the conflict between wisdom and majority power is occasionally unpleasant.

Both traditions point to a tradition above human beings which guides human conduct. The Bible offers the revealed Word of God. Socrates offers his fellow citizens the life of the mind. Both traditions also realize the tension between revelation and reason. Satan tempts Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because this fruit will allegedly enable them to become like God. When the Delphic Oracle informs Socrates that he is the wisest man in Athens, he denies this revelation, and by questioning his fellow Athenians, effectively questions the gods of his city. Thus both traditions indicate that the life of the mind is the highest form of wholly human life, and both point to a standard of Truth beyond human comprehension.

Those who founded modern democracies were aware of the profound tension between the revealed Word of the Almighty and the reasoning capacities of human beings. They did not claim an ability to resolve this tension, and attempted to avoid the conflict as much as possible. Acknowledging the fallibility of their fellow citizens, these democrats hoped to elevate "reflection and choice" over "force and accident" as governing mechanisms in human affairs. With appropriately complex mechanisms (in addition to *The Federalist,* consult Rousseau, *On the Government of Poland,* and Locke, *Fundamental Constitution for the Carolinas)* these founders hoped to develop means of mitigating the bestial tendencies in human nature and thus to render democracy a safe form of government for mankind.

At the heart of this enterprise, authority became transformed from a capacity associated with people's higher faculties to a product of popular consensus. Ironically, authority in modern societies is considered a consequence, rather than a source, of power. The majority now imagines that it can create authority, and it no longer consults authorities for guidance. This alteration of tradition lies at the center of the moral inversion of our age.

If Richard Sennett happened upon this essay, he would wonder what the topics covered so far have to do with the book that he wrote. He mentions neither the tradition of revelation nor the tradition of reason; nor does he acknowledge any tension between them. Rather than the disciplines of philosophy or theology, Sennett prefers to limit his discussion of authority to the confines of behavioral social psychology. The weaknesses of the book are a consequence of the blinders that he brings to the topic.

For Sennett, the bond of authority is merely "the emotional expression of power." Sennett is concerned primarily with the ways in which feelings about authority are expressed in human relationships. Human beings, he believes, are creatures who attempt to make sense of their lives, or "interpreting animals." In this context, Sennett can be said to pursue a middle ground. Although we have descended from the classical stature as "rational animals," Sennett would not wish us lowered to the wholly brutish ground of Hobbes's clashing individuals. This middle ground forms the territory for the social context in which humans interrelate, and Sennett pursues an inquiry into "how different kinds of emotions are organized differently in modern society."

His inquiry into the social appearances of authority is offered as the first of four interrelated essays on human social relations, his other subjects being solitude, fraternity and ritual. Authority is a relationship between people who are unequal. Sennett is rather flexible about exactly what constitutes a basis

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for this inequality; thus his version of authority has as many potential bases as there are grounds of human differentiation. Age, wealth, sex and various forms of status (elected office, work role, family ties and credentials, for example) all form potential bases for those pursuing some form of domination over others.

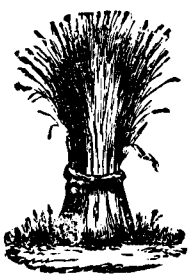
Sennett has a desire to display his own claim to authority, of course, and that display necessitates trotting out anecdotes from assorted literati and philosophers to complement his clinical examples. He uses learned writers as vehicles of support for his own points, and not necessarily with regard to the context or the particular points that the other writers advanced. He manages to relate Dostoyevsky's parable of Christ's confrontation with the Grand Inquisitor without considering the element of Christ's divinity. Hegel's "master-servant" dialectic becomes a means of achieving balance through negation, although Sennett has not succeeded in conveying any convincing sense of why the dialectic should stop at any particular balance point. In particular, despite his unquestioning embrace of democracy as an "ideal," he appears unaware of the senses in which democracy is merely a means of legitimating power (and can never be a source of authority) and the ways in which democracy has difficulty accommodating true authority.

Sennett persists in the academic habit of finding current power in the few, that is to say, the wealthy or the great. In simple terms, this is a childish conception of power in the modern age. One need only contemplate the numerous bases of support that must be nourished to cultivate power in a modern society to realize that the wealthy and powerful individuals in democracies are subject to continuous whims of majority sentiment. Turning on those who appear to be succeeding is one of the surest routes to democratic power. Those who truly succeed in our society maintain their status most effectively by hiding their achievement from an envious public.

The American Founders, in contrast to the experience of all previous democracies, believed that complex electoral mechanisms could enable average citizens to elevate the best of their fellows to public office. If democracy worked this way, it would be capable of securing fundamental human rights, and thus live down the shame under which it had been cast for centuries. They chose a large republic because only a large republic could offer the potential for national strength that is an essential element of modern politics, and because only a large republic offered a potential control for the problems of majority faction that had plagued previous small democracies.

Sennett retains a nostalgia for small communities, but he appears unaware of any dangers of majority tyranny. He wants people to feel comfortable with the leaders in whom they vest power through democratic processes, and he believes that the feeling of legitimacy will enable us to accept that power as authoritative. Yet Sennett never confronts the question of the *ends* toward which majority power might be directed. Undoubtedly he would not like a Hitler or a Stalin, but if these tyrants proved capable of making majorities comfortable, Sennett offers no ground to challenge the power that majorities might vest in them.

True authority, on the other hand, rarely makes people feel comfortable. One does not lose his fear of the Lord, especially as He becomes close and familiar, because he realizes that the Almighty can set standards that no mere mortal can attain. He remains capable of inflicting eternal punishment on us for violating His law, even if all other mortals find that standard too exacting, or, as we are wont to say, "antiquated." Similarly, few of us feel comfortable in the presence of those who really know a subject, because their knowledge is always capable of exposing our ignorance. All of us have been acquainted with the teacher who was so well informed that he did not suffer our foolish questions pleasantly. The truth of that teacher's answers never depended upon the ability of average students in the class to understand them.



In effect, Sennett has given us a version of authority stripped of any author. It might be vested by majority sentiment, but it can be no more stable than the sentiments of the majority supporting it. This is the reason that, as we move toward a democracy responsive to public-opinion polls, our leaders are unable to develop anything resembling stable programs. True authorities need not base their power on such quicksand. Authority requires an element that people can respect, which is to say that it must be based upon an appeal to the highest human faculties, and point toward standards above those of mere mortals.

In a manner fitting current fashions, Sennett attempts to derive his notion of authority from the lowest common denominator of human experience. In doing so, he has left a void at the spiritual center of human existence. Around that hollow core, Sennett analyzes a variety of processes to make people feel comfortable. Whatever comfort readers might derive from his ideas of authoritative relationships will collapse once a True Authority asks these hollow people to justify their lives. One doubts that He will be pleased with accounts of pleasures experienced in a bestial existence. The vacuum at the core of Sennett's discussion will do people a favor only if they become aware of the omitted core. □

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Sunken Soufflées

John Kenneth Galbraith: *Annals of an Abiding Liberal;* Houghton Mifflin Co.; Boston.

by James Hitchcock

All authors must be more than a little egotistical, assuming as they do that there are people who will pay money for what they have to say. How much more egotistical is the author who collects his stray essays into a single volume, assuming that there are people who will actually pay twice to read him, once in a magazine, then again in a book.

The subtitle of Professor Galbraith's collection is "Perspectives on the Twentieth Century and the Case for Coming to Terms with It." Here, surely, are the ripe reflections of forty years, systematized at last. Instead, what the unsuspecting reader finds is a collection of Galbraith's miscellaneous journalism. The careful purchaser will discover that fact on the inside of the front dust cover. But the consumer-protection movement seems to have few champions in the world of publishing, and if someone pays $12.95 only to find that he has bought, among other exotica, Galbraith's list of the seven wonders of the world, or pages from his 1978 travel diary, well, the author is enough of a free-enterprise enthusiast, apparently, to murmur urbanely *"caveat emptor."*

One of the abiding mysteries about Professor Galbraith is the exact source of his celebrity. Most people who have heard of him would probably say that he is one of America's great economists. Yet there are economists, by no means all of whom are in ideological disagreement with him, who insist that he is really no economist at all but rather a high-level popularizer. In the appendix to the book (his 1972 presidential address to the American Economic Association), he takes on such critics, and elsewhere he suggests that economists deliberately obfuscate their science in order to maintain their authority. What is the poor layman to think of all this? Willingness to accept Professor Galbraith's version of things is tempered by the realization that he has managed to minimize the ubiquitous influence of Keynesianism on public policy during the past forty-five years. He would also have us believe that he is still fighting a brave battle against the disciples of David Ricardo.

If a suspicion emerges that Professor Galbraith is, perhaps, not a major economic thinker, what is he? A good English stylist, certainly, a skilled polemicist fond of the rapier who almost never uses the battle-ax. Could it be suggested that what he practices is essentially Sunday-supplement journalism, and that his Harvard professorship serves only to give his opinions a weight they would not otherwise have?

There is nothing wrong with good journalism, but the point is highly relevant in Galbraith's case, not only because virtually all of these essays end up as sunken soufflées, but also because it finally explains why there is something rather offensive about his writings, even apart from their content. To put it simply, he uses a certain genuine style and modest wit to compensate for the dubiousness of his ideas. What the reader finally senses is that Professor Galbraith does not ask to be judged on the correctness of his judgments. He aims to entertain.

Again, there is nothing wrong with literary entertainment. But Galbraith simultaneously seeks to be regarded as an important thinker and employs a tone of weary but affable contempt against those who disagree with him. He does not argue the case for his own positions, but simply implies that other opinions are beneath serious consideration.

In certain respects he seems to be a choice example of the now slightly outmoded phenomenon of radical chic—a social critic who makes a handsome living from his writings, the merciless scourge of businessmen who has little to say about the anomalies of his own position, the long-time frequenter of Gstaad who professes annoyance with the jet set, the putative reformer of universities who admittedly neglects his own students. Repeatedly asked to address conventions of businessmen (undoubtedly for fat fees), he does not conceal his contempt for his audiences and their unenlightened questions.

> "The liberalism displayed herein arises not from any loud noise in the outraged heart but from common sense and contemplation of the self-evident."
> —*New York Times Book Review*

Since, despite his title, Professor Galbraith obviously did not intend to offer a comprehensive discussion of liberalism, it is perhaps unfair to tax him with what he left out. But surely he would not disagree with the thesis that vendors can always be held responsible for the deficiencies of products they offer to the public. Galbraith's liberalism is oddly old-fashioned; it hardly goes beyond questions of domestic economic policy and foreign affairs, in neither of which areas he has anything new or remarkable to say. Surely, however, what is most interesting about liberalism in the last years of the 20th century is its moral implications. There is growing evidence that the liberals' skewed understanding of personal freedom is destroying even the possibility of a moral social order, and that in its place a therapeutically totalitarian state is in the making. There is no evidence that Galbraith

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even recognizes the question.

In India, Galbraith was asked by a reporter how he and his wife had stayed married so long and how they had raised their children. The question itself said much about the perceived state of the Western societies which liberalism has created. Galbraith's reply: "I enlarged on the need to devote as little time as possible to one's offspring lest they acquire one's bad habits . . . I also hold that marriage being a perilous and improbable association, it is safe only if the principals don't see much of each other." Readers with a taste for this sort of thing—a kind of defanged Evelyn Waugh (whom Galbraith admires as a writer)—will enjoy the book. Perhaps the professor was merely reaffirming his belief in privacy. But the flippant, lofty, world-weary tone, the inability to take seriously a subject which is not only serious but also critical, in itself says much about the bankruptcy of liberalism. An equally revealing pattern is found in Professor Galbraith's frequent comments about communism. Typically, he reveals that he never became a communist in the 1930's, but offers a half-facetious reason (he was from the kind of rural background which Marx had called "idiocy"), which suggests that there could be no serious intellectual or moral objections to communism.

Galbraith is not the kind of liberal who would ever be trapped into propagandizing for communist regimes. But in a sense he is a more destructive kind, the kind who agreed long ago to stipulate that communist societies perpetrate atrocities; he no longer wishes to discuss the subject. This permits him, by an inflection of voice, a flip of his hand, the elevation of an eyebrow, to imply that misdeeds are approximately equal in distribution between communist and noncommunist regimes and there is little to choose between them. Although as an argument it would scarcely withstand a minute's scrutiny, his position seems to be that communist expansionism is possibly nonexistent and certainly nonthreatening, that there is little the United States can or should do to counter it, and that communist triumphs have no seriously adverse effects on countries where they occur. Alger Hiss was probably guilty, he admits, but what of it?

In the end, Professor Galbraith's attitude towards communism, like almost everything else in this book, seems to derive mainly from considerations of tone and style: anticommunism is simply too uncouth, too emotional, too, well, serious to be allowed within sniffing distance of a man who requires that social criticism not disrupt his pleasured and leisurely stroll through the world. □

Can Any Good Thing Come out of Sociology?

Robert Nisbet: *History of the Idea of Progress;* Basic Books; New York.

by James J. Thompson, Jr.

A jaded observer of the political follies of post-Civil War America once quipped that the succession of presidents from George Washington to Ulysses Grant disproved Darwin's theory of evolutionary progression. In similar fashion, one might hazard the opinion that the line of sociologists from Max Weber to the present belies the idea of progress. From the heights attained by such 19th- and early 20th-century theorists as Weber, Herbert Spencer, Vilfredo Pareto and Emile Durkheim, sociology has descended into the depths of triviality and posturing radicalism. Sociologists in the United States today generally fall into one of three categories. The most harmless practitioners of the discipline specialize in churning out turgid treatises that lovingly enshrine a paucity of insight in a pseudoscientific jargon that defies penetration by all but a few initiates. A second band of sociologists has elevated a perverse fascination with the cesspools of our society into a realm of high scholarly endeavor. These intrepid researchers—easily spotted on college campuses by their blue jeans and ponytails—titillate their students with learned discourses on the mores of whores, pimps, drug pushers, transvestites, pederasts, rock musicians and other loathsome creatures. A third and final group of sociologists, armed with third-rate Marxist slogans, produces lugubrious accounts of social oppression, and with the daring expected of those ensconced in the comforts of tenure, these bold radicals urge their students to bring down the pillars of a repressive society.

With a clear conscience I would gladly consign the entire lot to an especially fiendish torment in the grim recesses of Dante's Inferno. But just as Yahweh spared a handful of righteous folk from the purging fires that consumed Sodom and Gomorrah, so must I relent for the sake of Robert Nisbet. With his erudition, graceful scholarship, felicitous prose and sparkling insight, Nisbet forces one to answer affirmatively—if begrudgingly—the question: "Can any good thing come out of a department of sociology?" Since the 1950's, in a steadily expanding shelf of titles, Nisbet has proven himself a worthy successor to the founding fathers of sociology. With such works as *The Quest for Community, The Sociological Tradition* and *The Twilight of Authority,* he has earned the right to stand among the leading social theorists of the contemporary Western world. His latest book, *History of the Idea of Progress,* will further enhance his already-secure reputation.

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Sixty years ago J. B. Bury, the eminent English historian of classical antiquity, wrote *The Idea of Progress.* Bury's book surveyed the history of that energizing idea in the West and, at the same time, marked the end of the idea's reign, for the Great Depression of the 1930's, the Holocaust, the Second World War, the Gulag and the specter of nuclear annihilation dealt harshly with the concept to which Bury had sung his hymn of praise. Surely, as the West approaches the end of one of the most disastrous centuries in its history, no one of sound mind can still celebrate belief in progress. Yet Robert Nisbet does, and he contends that the idea "has done more good over a twenty-five-hundred-year period, led to more creativeness in more spheres, and given more strength to human hope and to individual desire for improvement than any other single idea in Western history." The idea of progress has spurred the West to ever-greater achievement, Nisbet argues; to forsake it would be to toll the bells of Western civilization's doom.

> ". . . a scissors-and-paste job, and a dull one, on the history of a great idea . . ."
> —*New York Review of Books*

Nisbet's book invites historians to choose sides between him and Bury and to engage in a bit of that internecine warfare that at times convinces one that something other than stagnation and time-serving reigns in the academy. These scholars will have a topic of substance to fight over, for if Bury and Nisbet agree that the idea of progress emerged in full panoply between 1750 and 1900, they differ sharply over when it first began to grasp the fancy of Western man. Bury opts for the 17th century, while Nisbet, in direct refutation of Bury, believes the concept of linear progress thrived among the Greeks and Romans of classical antiquity and, more surprisingly, that it hummed steadily along throughout the supposedly "otherworldly" Middle Ages.

Nisbet's book may not stir the ranks of historians after all, though, for his identification as a sociologist and his willingness to tackle the whole expanse of Western history (an approach that has fallen into disfavor in a profession increasingly given to celebrating the virtues of the mole) may produce only raised eyebrows and disdainful sniffs within the historical fraternity. But among those engaged in the heated debate over the future of the American republic, the *History of the Idea of Progress* will provoke much discussion, for Nisbet has written a tract for our times. Quite simply, Robert Nisbet flings his words at those environmentalists, no-growth socialists and cheerleaders of imminent Western decline who blame the idea of progress for producing environmental disaster, feverish greed and overweening arrogance toward the rest of mankind. Nisbet, by contrast, argues that the idea of progress has stimulated Western man to attain an unparalleled level of economic security and has encouraged him to believe that freedom, equality and democracy are "not merely desirable but historically necessary, inevitable of achievement."

What is at stake in this debate? Such fanatics as Tom Hayden and Ralph Nader—unversed as they may be in the grand traditions of the West—have mounted a bitter attack upon one of the main premises of Western civilization. In assailing the idea of progress they wish to substitute their own vision of the Good Society. They would eviscerate the economic might of America, reduce the United States to a third-rate power, banish any suggestion of the cultural superiority of the West, and root out the last vestiges of that exuberant optimism that has driven Western man to improve his lot in life. Nisbet correctly sees that such a vision would spell the death of the historic Western commitment to the idea of progress. By tracing the history of this idea Nisbet places the present debate over America's future in its broadest context.

I stand with Nisbet against the Haydens and Naders, but I am uneasy with his enthusiasm for the idea of progress. Historically, the supporters of this idea have been the progressivists, the innovators, the advocates of change, those restless and energetic men who have sought to break barriers, to push into new realms and to get on with the future. In the 20th century, writes Nisbet, "there is no stronger affirmation of mankind's progress . . . than that contained in the books, articles, manifestos, and speeches of the socialists and communists." Rousseau, Condorcet, Comte and Marx parade through Nisbet's pages, but where are the conservatives? Granted, Nisbet lauds the contributions of Adam Smith and Herbert Spencer, those twin beacons of contemporary libertarianism and free-market theory, but he pays scant attention to those traditionalist conservatives descended from Edmund Burke. And for good reason: they either supported the idea of progress in a highly qualified fashion, or they adamantly opposed it. Where does this leave the traditionalists of today? Must they commit themselves to the idea of progress in order to stave off the destruction of the West?

Nisbet's praise of the millennial strain in Christianity raises another thorny issue. Christian millennialists have certainly fueled the West's lust for a better future, but at what price? Eric Voegelin, possibly the most brilliant political theorist and philosopher of history in the 20th century, has spied in such Christians the urge to "immanentize the eschaton," to bring heaven down to earth and to seek temporal perfection and salvation. As with the Protestant sectarians of the 16th century and the English Puritans one hundred years later, these people have frequently shown a willingness to usher in the millennium with the sword. If the thousand-year reign draws nigh, then why not hasten it in with the cleansing fires of destruction? Who better exemplifies

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this impulse today than the advocates of liberation theology and those leaders of the World Council of Churches who bestowed blessings—and money—upon the black butchers of Rhodesia? Progressive as it may be, millennialism forms a volatile and potentially destructive strain within Christianity.

Robert Nisbet longs to bolster Americans' sagging confidence in the idea of progress. But should we not think twice before undertaking this task? Without siding with the no-growth advocates one can justifiably argue that the historic Western commitment to the idea of progress deserves a bit of chastening. The hungry search for knowledge does not necessarily bring beneficence, especially when it strips man of his sense of awe before the mysteries of the cosmos. When cast in the form of continual technological innovation, progress brings disruption and confusion, and an overriding emphasis upon economic growth encourages crass materialism. Since the onset of the industrial era the quest for progress has too often destroyed man's respect for the natural world, tied him to machines, and promoted a geographical and social mobility that has disparaged tradition, gutted settled communities, and cut man adrift to wander through a world of atomistic individualism. Allen Tate, Donald Davidson and the other Southerners who wrote *I'll Take My Stand* fifty years ago realized all this, and their symposium remains one of the best guides to the traditionalist quarrel with the idea of progress. To question this idea does not necessarily indicate a desire to destroy Western civilization; indeed, only through such questioning can one adequately conserve the best of the past, enjoy the full fruits of the present, and lay a solid foundation upon which to build the future.

Despite my reservations, Robert Nisbet has performed a valuable service in charting the history of the idea of progress and in adumbrating what he thinks its demise will mean. The debate stimulated by such a thoughtful and intelligent book will not solve the problems that beset our society, but it will help us to approach those problems with greater clarity and insight and thus prevent us from lurching blindly into the future. □

The *New York Times's* Game of Colors

Harrison E. Salisbury: *Without Fear or Favor: An Uncompromising Look at the New York Times;* Times Books; New York.

by Lev Navrozov

Like any other social group, the *New York Times* staff (I mean those responsible for the final decision-making, of course) has social interests of its own which may or may not coincide with those of the American people as a whole, not to mention those of the nontotalitarian world. To conceal any possible discrepancy and pretend to speak always in the best interests of the United States or the West, the *Times,* like a chameleon, adopts whatever coloration seems appropriate.

Until the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939, the *Times's* Walter Duranty extolled Stalin's Russia. In fact, Stalin personally praised Mr. Duranty—not for his pro-Soviet stand, but for his purely Stalinist position. When Stalin executed the old Bolsheviks, Duranty duly described the victims as Gestapo agents who deserved whatever they got. Harrison Salisbury defines Duranty as an "eccentric conservative." Yes, being conservative was the *coloring* which he assumed, chameleonlike, because, except for the period between 1966 and 1975, it was important for the *New York Times* to be regarded as "a little on the conservative side," certainly not left-wing. But in his reports to the *New York Times* from Moscow, the conservative Duranty was a consistent and enthusiastic Stalinist. Thus, on the one hand, we have the social interests of the *New York Times,* which prompted it to accept Stalin's view of Stalin's regime (until 1939); on the other hand, we have the corporate interests of the *New York Times* as an institution which has always coveted a monopoly of cultural, hence political, power. Duranty was employed precisely because he could pose as a conservative, albeit a somewhat eccentric one, thus enhancing the credibility of the *New York Times* and widening its political base to include conservatives as well. After all, if Stalin and his regime were as good—at least for the Russian people—as the conservative Duranty described them, why should an honest conservative deny U.S. government recognition to Stalin's regime?

Between 1966 and 1975 it was more advantageous for the *New York Times,* for the sake of its corporate interests, to assume a liberal coloration—certainly nonconservative—and the *Times* vied with *Rolling Stone* in its leftward dash. What will be the best coloring for the 1980's? If the *New York Times* persists in its 60's and 70's coloring, it will destroy its monopoly of cultural and political power, because its corporate interests now demand a new coloring. The chameleon would destroy itself if it still looked red against a background which had turned green. Thus the *New York Times* is changing color again.

To display this new coloring is the real *raison d'être* of Harrison Salisbury's book. This does not mean that the *Times* has already assumed the full

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intensity of the new coloration. But let us recall that Mr. Salisbury has always been the most chameleonic of the *Times's* editors. He was the first to jump on the left-wing bandwagon of the 60's, and he has now changed his coloring so quickly and drastically that it renders the observer dizzy and breathless. I have no doubt that the *New York Times* will follow his lead. The Soviet threat, which the *New York Times* has fantasized into a "Soviet-American friendship," will get worse with every passing year. And the public mood will change accordingly, no matter what the *New York Times* would like to do to stop this. Some events are so stark and obvious that even the *Times* cannot prevent their impact on the American population at large. Mr. Salisbury did not understand this at the time of our 1975 debate on television. Now he does.

Mr. Salisbury describes what he calls the "top echelon of the *Times,"* which determined the political orientation of the institution as of 1971 (although Mr. Salisbury begins with several earlier decision-makers, evidently in order to demonstrate an unbroken tradition). Here are Mr. Salisbury's descriptions:

Turner Catledge—"His Ole Miss classmate had been John Stennis, as stalwart a hawk and military proponent as was to be found in the U.S. Senate." Once, McCarthy was accused of assigning guilt by contiguity. Now Mr. Salisbury proudly assigns conservative credentials by contiguity. Surely Catledge was conservative if his classmate was John Stennis.

Clifton Daniel—For God's sake, his father-in-law was President Truman, and "his political persuasions were close to those of his father-in-law."

Arthur Hays Sulzberger—He "warmly backed Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956," writes Mr. Salisbury enthusiastically. And Eisenhower advocated a roll-back policy vis-à-vis the Soviet regime, not just containment.

James Reston—"Scotty Reston was an essentially conservative man who grew steadily more conservative as the years passed."

"Max Frankel . . . consciously modeled himself on Reston." "The same could be said of managing editor Rosenthal, who had emerged as the most conservative editor on the paper."

But nothing is perfect—or at least nothing is perfectly conservative—not even at the *New York Times.*

> There was one major *Times* editor who was outspoken and vigorous in his opposition to the Vietnam War and to American policy in Indochina as carried out by Presidents Johnson and Nixon.

So there was *one* such editor. A black sheep. A rotten apple. An oddball. Who was that terrible maverick?

> This was John Oakes, fifty-eight years old in March 1971, director of the editorial page . . .

Surely we can assume that *he,* at least, was not a conservative. Oh, but he was, according to Salisbury: "Oakes was a member of X-2, the counterintelligence group of OSS, and among his colleagues was . . . James Angleton . . . who ultimately headed the counterintelligence branch of the CIA." However, from 1966 to 1975 the CIA was, as an institution *in toto,* as antidefense as the *New York Times,* and it is difficult to say which of them did more damage to the country. But Mr. Salisbury still banks on the good-old-days conservative credentials of the CIA. Also, we learn that "Oakes had declared his total agreement . . . with Rosenthal's worry over what he perceived as the paper's trend to the left politically." Pinkos on the *Times?* Said Oakes: "I would fire some of those bastards." If Rosenthal was the most conservative editor, Oakes was the mostest. So what was wrong with this archconservative?

> Oakes was a painfully honest, painfully principled man. There was no one more upright on the *Times* than Oakes but there was no one so totally lacking in humor. Oakes was dedicated to his opposition to the Vietnam war, dedicated in his general hostility to Richard Nixon . . .

I suppose Oakes was kept on the *New York Times* out of charity: the most conservative conservative, yet with a loose screw up there. To oppose the Vietnam War! It was simply a streak of madness in this dyed-in-the-wool conservative.

Mr. Salisbury drops references and allusions to the conservatism of the "top echelon of the *Times"* throughout the book. "Walter Sullivan, the *Times* science specialist, went to Yale with James Angleton," and "Sullivan, McGeorge Bundy and Angleton were on the board of the *Yale Literary Magazine* together, Sullivan and Bundy being literary conservatives and Angleton the radical." Abe Rosenthal "came in later days to describe himself as a 'bleeding-heart' conservative . . . sour on 'the liberal camp.' Rosenthal's close friend William F. Buckley, Jr., founder with Rosenthal of an eight-man marching-

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and-chowder society . . . spoke of Rosenthal with awe as a 'terrific anti-Communist.' "

So William F. Buckley, Jr. was overawed. Is this why his magazine became anticommunist too? "Richard Clurman, another friend and club member, felt that Abe's political roots lay in the cold war." A real anticommunist cold warrior at the helm of the *New York Times.* But who was more rigorously anticommunist, the *New York Times* or Joseph McCarthy? Mr. Salisbury cites a letter Arthur Sulzberger wrote to General Lucius D. Clay in the late 40's:

> I asked my associates yesterday what their views would be if we suddenly found ourselves at war with Russia. They agreed instantly that all of these persons [communists or former communists], plus those who were even suspect, would be out. Then I asked them if a state of peace existed now.

Of course it did not. The Soviet regime eventually engineered the Berlin blockade, and later, North Vietnam's conquest of South Vietnam and Cambodia —hardly a state of peace. Sulzberger was right!

> The line which Arthur Sulzberger drew in the letter to Clay and the position taken in the editorial 'We have a Right to Know' [i.e., to know who on the *New York Times* was once a member of the American Communist Party] did not differ greatly from the expressed attitude of the Eastland committee. Both positions were vigorously anti-Communist but while the Eastland committee and McCarthy sought to sow general distrust and hatred of the press, Arthur Sulzberger was fighting to preserve the press and protect it against contamination [by the communists]. He expected his editors to guard vigilantly against tainting of the news . . .

So Sulzberger was a McCarthy (or an Eastland) of the press, so to speak, fighting within the press against communist contamination and guarding vigilantly against communist tainting of the news.

How will Mr. Salisbury and the *New York Times really* change now that he has announced that it has always been so conservative, prodefense and anticommunist as to awe even William F. Buckley, Jr.? We can get a hint from Mr. Salisbury's article, "A Boon for the KGB" *(New York Times,* January 31, 1980). According to Mr. Salisbury, the "whole Soviet economic system might simply collapse." What could possibly make that happen? According to Mr. Salisbury, the Olympics would bring about this terrible destruction of the Soviet regime, and President Carter prevented it by his boycott:

> What dynamite items the Olympics would introduce into Soviet culture probably will never be known if, as President Carter wishes, the boycott succeeds.

This is why the U.S. boycott of the Olympics is a cause for rejoicing among Soviet secret police—it is a "boon for the KGB." By the same token, it can be claimed that détente, SALT, the sale of technology to the Soviet military machine, American unilateral disarmament, and unopposed Soviet conquests have all been detrimental to the Soviet regime: it is odd how the latter has survived.

The question is: If the Olympics were dynamite for the Soviet regime, while the boycott was a boon for the KGB, why did the Soviet rulers struggle for Moscow to be the site of the 1980 Olympics, and why were they protesting the boycott so fiercely? The only explanation is that they forgot to consult Mr. Salisbury as to what might dynamite their regime. In other words, Mr. Salisbury and his newspaper are still pursuing the same goals as in the 60's and 70's; only their coloration is different. In 1980 Mr. Salisbury argues against any tough American moves in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan:

> There is, we should understand, a flip side to American policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. There is a hawk faction in the Soviet Union just as in the United States. Each tough Carter move will evoke a tough one within the Soviet Union.

Thus speaks the conservative Mr. Salisbury in his conservative newspaper in 1980. But didn't we hear exactly the same argument from 1966 to '75 from the liberal Mr. Salisbury and his liberal newspaper? Surely all Soviet aggression in those days was also explained as a response to American toughness. Should the United States surrender today, the conservative Mr. Salisbury would explain that the act of surrender was too tough, and hence the Soviet rulers have to be tough in response.

"The *Times* is a great newspaper—a national treasure . . ."
—*New York Magazine*

What is the rest of the book like and why is it subtitled "An Uncompromising Look at the *New York Times*"? When a courtier of Nicholas I of Russia was asked what he thought of His Majesty's Russia (where serfdom still flourished), the courtier first maintained that he was not born to be a flatterer or time-server, that his look at His Majesty's Russia would be uncompromising, that he was wont to speak the truth without fear or favor, no matter how unpleasant to His Majesty it might be. "Your Majesty," the courtier finally said, "the past of Russia is glorious, the present is magnificent, and the future surpasses any human notion." Substitute *"New York Times"* for "Russia" and you have Mr. Salisbury's uncompromising look at the *New York Times.* No, not a single compromise—the unvarnished, unbiased truth:

> The *Times* [as of 1971] was by every

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> objective criterion the most thorough, most complete, most responsible newspaper that time, money, talent and technology in the second half of the twentieth century had been able to produce.

As I studied Mr. Salisbury's book, I found only one accusation that he failed to hurl in the face of the *New York Times:* that all the female employees are the most beautiful women on earth, while the men constitute the greatest assemblage of cool elegance ever gathered.

Like all experienced flatterers, Mr. Salisbury has created a cloying fantasy and called it an "uncompromising look" at the object of his adulation. The intermittent references to reality, such as the publishing of the Pentagon papers or Watergate, are intended only to illustrate how the conservative upper echelon of the *Times* won genuine freedom of the press (for the *Times,* that is, the American people, of course). Mr. Salisbury fantasizes that this, the most perfect of newspapers, has always been, apart from its other virtues, strictly conservative, vigilantly anticommunist, tirelessly prodefense. For this is the public mood these days, and so Mr. Salisbury projects his mimicry into the past of the *New York Times.*

Another noticeable aspect is Mr. Salisbury's announcement that a "New American Revolution" has taken place, as a result of which the *New York Times* (not the press, mind you, but the *New York Times)* has become the "fourth coeval branch of government." Indeed, the *New York Times* rules the country to a greater extent than either the president or Congress. If New York Times, Inc. does not like the president, the president will go. Those who do not identify New York Times, Inc. with the American people should heed this aspect of Mr. Salisbury's tribute to his beloved institution.

Characteristically, *Without Fear or Favor* resembles an anniversary album. On the left-side front page we read:

> To Give the News Impartially without Fear or Favor Regardless of any Party, Sect or Interest Involved.
> —Adolph S. Ochs/1896

On the right-side page we read the dedication to the "only child of Adolph S. Ochs," including due mention of all the interrelated founding fathers, mothers, wives and in-laws. "Quintessentially," Salisbury explains in his preface to the book, "it [the story of the *New York Times*] is the story of . . . a struggle against what the poet Robert Bly once called the 'American system of hypocrisy,' the seamless belts of lies (as Bly put it, 'the ministers lie, the professors lie, the television lies, the priests lie')." Where did Mr. Bly's unique gift for truth-telling come from if everyone else lied? Obviously, its origin was not environmental, but genetic and defying all environment, from television to professors. According to Mr. Salisbury, the institution called the *New York Times* received the same unique ability at its inception. Its triumphs of truth-telling in a country (or a world?) of seamless belts of lies "flow out of the continuity of the *Times,* of its rebirth under Adolph S. Ochs." The preface duly ends with another variation on the same theme: in the world of the "BIGS, Big Government, Big Bureaucracy, Big Spying, Big Interests, Big Labor, Big Business," the *New York Times* is "carrying on the task as Mr. Ochs promised, 'without fear or favor.' " Curiously, Mr. Salisbury forgets that on the next page he boasts that the *New York Times* was (as of 1971) one of the 500 biggest American corporations. He repeats the founding father's behest throughout, and ends with the same, displaying the perseverance of those Soviet truth-seekers who explain that Lenin's pledge to make mankind free and happy is now brilliantly realized. □

Direct Clarity & Elliptical Subtlety

Louis Auchincloss: *The House of the Prophet;* Houghton Mifflin Co.; Boston.

Shirley Hazzard: *The Transit of Venus;* Viking Press; New York.

by Stephen L. Tanner

The title of Louis Auchincloss's *The House of the Prophet* derives from Matthew 13:57: "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house." The prophet in this case, Felix Leitner, is not a religious man at all. He is a prophet of humanism and rationalism, an admirer of the late-18th century vision of human society run by reason and equity. As a distinguished lawyer, an influential author of books on constitutional law and international politics and a celebrated columnist, he has achieved prophetic stature by his apparently uncompromising quest for intellectual truth. His loyalty to truth takes precedence over loyalty to any person, group or organization with whom he might associate. Such commitment to rational truth, so admired by the public, often bewilders, unsettles and antagonizes those close to him.

As Felix reaches the end of his career, his long-time assistant and protégé, Roger Cutter, gathers material for a biography. The novel consists of this material, which includes, in addition to Roger's own recollections, those of Felix, his two wives, a law partner, an

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old friend and a stepdaughter. The image of Felix Leitner which emerges from these sources is contradictory. Everyone acknowledges his brilliance and ability; some admire his charm and humane principles; but others find him crafty, calculating, cold, inhumanly objective, monstrously egotistical. Roger, the would-be biographer, faces a dilemma concerning his subject: "The issue has to be, Did he care more for truth or for the fame he derived in perceiving it? Did he love mankind or mankind as personified in Felix Leitner? . . . was he a free soul, or was he simply ashamed of his background? Was he the perfect democrat or . . . was he the perfect snob?"

Trained in the prophet's adherence to intellectual truth, Roger is unable to resolve the dilemma, and, refusing to produce his own portrait, which would fall short of objective truth (as, of course, all biography does), he gives up the project and simply makes his resource materials available to the public. Turning instead to preparation for a book on Felix's writing, he feels a sense of relief and order. The factions and contradictions are gone; he is "alone with Felix at last."

Auchincloss has stacked the deck, of course. Through the information carefully provided, and deliberately dialectical, it is impossible for Roger or the reader to determine conclusively Felix's true nature. The point of the novel is to bring into focus the essential problem of biography: To what extent is it possible to know the truth about one particular complex human personality when the witnesses are all complex human personalities filtering their impressions through the alembics of their own minds? Love, hate, envy, prejudice all affect that process.

Auchincloss accentuates the biographical difficulty by his portrayal of Roger. If anyone could have known Felix, it was he. Being sexually impotent, he has in a measure been forced to live life vicariously, sharing Felix's life. He admits, "I had no other life but his," and that "Felix is more important to me than I am to myself." Felix informs him, "I don't suppose there really has ever been anyone who has understood me but you." Roger, while pleased with his closeness to Felix, is troubled momentarily with the thought that in adapting so thoroughly to Felix's needs he has ceased to exist. It is vital, therefore, for him to know the truth about Felix.

That he ultimately finds a manageable, coherent truth about Felix in the writings has interesting implications. Is Auchincloss suggesting that a writer's personal life and external personality are inevitably problematical of knowing and that the true self—or at least a more unified, knowable and important self—is to be discovered in the writing? A Shakespeare motif running through the novel confirms this notion. Conversations about that poet center on his late plays, in which, according to Felix, he gave himself up to words. Felix is explicitly likened to Shakespeare more than once, and Roger tells us "words were his life." The parallel operates like this: just as the truth about Shakespeare's character and personality is enigmatic and his work, after all, makes the enigma inconsequential, so with Felix Leitner; Roger cannot solve the riddle of his character, but the writings have a coherent nature that overshadows and minimizes the urgency of that riddle.

The Shakespeare motif also functions in the development of another of the novel's major themes: the question of vocation. Should the man of noble abilities be a doer or a thinker, a man of action or an observer and commentator? Felix chooses the latter, making his mark by words rather than deeds, and is criticized for being a "divine umpire" who can't face responsibility—"the great onlooker who doesn't want to get his feet wet." His first wife, with her leftist and activist attitudes, encourages him toward action and is greatly disappointed when he turns down a position on the National Labor Relations Board with an accompanying promise of a future on the federal bench. But he does not want to implement anything or be on anyone's team. By linking Felix's achievement in words as being most important with the similar case of Shakespeare, Auchincloss affirms the value of the life of the mind and the pre-eminence of the written word.

This affirmation is also reflected in the very style of the novel. The writing is direct and lucid. One could object to the uniformity of voice in sections allegedly written by different people, but somehow that does not matter. The style communicates so clearly and unself-consciously that one ignores it to concentrate on what is said. There is plenty of intelligent talk about literature, art and history in the novel as well as an abundance of ideas. The development of the main theme is unified and economical. The book reflects an author who values intellect, clarity, order and simplicity. This is novel number 22 for Auchincloss, and it will certainly enhance his reputation rather than diminish it.

The style and method of Shirley Hazzard's *The Transit of Venus* contrast sharply with those of Auchincloss. Hazzard aims for subtlety, not wanting to state things too flatly or completely. Often she uses an elliptical technique for conveying routine situations, simply joining together cliché phrases and letting the reader fill in what is omitted: "The officer beside the driver was pointing out, 'Here there was, apparently there used to be, you wouldn't credit it now.' " Sentence fragments are abundant. Dialogue is punctuated with subtle description of psychological nuance that is often interpolated in an annoyingly fragmented way. It is a self-conscious style, often cleverly precise in conveying fine shadings of attitude and emotion, but it is frequently inconsiderate of the reader, who sometimes has the impression of looking through binoculars with one lens out of focus or through a slit in a fence fringed with shrubs; the view is not clear and complete. Though she

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is skillful and imaginative in using figurative language, her sentences are sometimes weakened by vague or abstract elements: "Experience was banked up around the room, a huge wave about to break," or "as to pleasure, he was suspicious of anything that relieved his feelings." With Auchincloss one is unaware of style; with Hazzard one cannot be unaware of it because it is constantly in the way.

I mention such details of the writing itself not for their intrinsic significance, but because they are indicative of what Shirley Hazzard conceives a novel to be and her basic method for creating one. Unlike Auchincloss's method of single-minded and economical development of a theme, Hazzard's approach is to include description of people, places and events for their own sake. A good deal of the material in the novel does not significantly advance the plot or further characterization. It is often interesting; Hazzard obviously found it so and employs her writing skill to make it so for us. It is a kind of notebook approach in which an author constructs a novel as a showcase for information and experiences recorded. Such a method can provide accurate description of places and vivid impressions of human life, but it tends to blur the focus of a novel and subordinate themes, ideas or issues.

"The Transit of Venus is, in fact, a wonderfully mysterious book . . . Both plot and characters are complex and puzzling and many-layered; reading about them, we feel gifted, privileged. It would diminish them, and us as well, if they were too fully explained."

—The New Republic

The Transit of Venus is a love story that examines the power and pitfalls of physical love. Caroline and Grace, orphaned sisters, come to England from Australia in the care of Dora, their stepsister. The action begins in the 50's with Caroline and Grace just arrived at marriageable age, and continues to the present.

Grace, sweet and pliable, marries Christian and accommodates herself to his conceit and selfishness. Caroline is kindhearted too, but is more impatient with the discrepancy between man as he might be and man as he is. She insists on believing in heroism and excellence and reserves her humility for the exceptions—the good people. Without realizing it, she rejects one of those good people, the astronomer Ted, and falls in love with the playwright Paul. These two men are "symbolically opposed": Paul represents selfishness, irresponsibility, perversion and deceit, while Ted embodies patience, compassion, loyalty and honesty.

The title refers to the phenomenon of Venus crossing the face of the sun, but more importantly it suggests physical love temporarily blotting out the sun of good sense. Caroline's passion for Paul, who ultimately proves to be despicable, blinds her to Ted's fine qualities, the very ones she values most highly. It takes about 25 years of experience, mostly negative, but including what we assume was a happy marriage to a humanitarian, for Caroline to recognize the truth. Why it takes an intelligent woman so long for the discovery is unclear. But when she makes it Ted is waiting patiently yet ardently, even though he has a wife and children of his own.

Ted once remarks that "an independent act of humanity is what society can least afford." Caroline later reflects on this statement, which expresses one of the novel's themes. Most of the people in Caroline's world are selfish, possessive and manipulative. Ted's most redeeming quality is that he never wanted power over her.

The principal victims of selfish manipulation are women, victimized in love, marriage and work. Caroline's brother-in-law is anxious to see her "sink into vapid domesticity." Her liberated girlfriend at work, who outrages her male superior by refusing to fix tea, is saddened to see her fall into the "common limbo of sexual love." The women of London at large are described as awake and yet "dormant." Scientists' wives are trained in self-effacement, and secretaries are trifled with. The major indictments made by feminists are clearly there.

Erotic love as a powerful force for good and evil, man's inhumanity to man, injustices suffered by women—these are significant themes, but they have been extensively mined. Substantial thought and imagination are required for locating a new vein of ore. This novel could profit from a little less style and more substance. It is satisfying to see two humane people finally brought together, but we wonder how the man will humanely cast off a wife and children he has not the least reason to despise. And it is salutary to be made aware of the various ways women are exploited, but if the best women are like Caroline, who persistently turns her back on goodhearted Ted and submits repeatedly to being used by Paul, a murderer and a homosexual, what chance is there for eliminating the victimization of women? Fine men desert their families, and intelligent women are deceived by unscrupulous men. Love does such things. But within the context of a novel, an author must pay special heed to plausibility and consistency. □

Editor's Note

An ill-conceived and unfortunate parallel between the actions and attitudes of the late Professor Lionel Trilling and the German philosopher Martin Heidegger found its way into a review by Professor Paul Gottfried ("Morals & Manners," May/June 1980 *Chronicles of Culture*). We assume responsibility for this editorial negligence, and we regret it.

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Our Betters

Robert Stephen Spitz: *Barefoot in Babylon;* Viking Press; New York.

Tony Sanchez: *Up and Down with the Rolling Stones;* Morrow Quill Paperbacks; New York.

by John O'Sullivan

A famous slogan of the late 60's boasted that a million people had gathered for love, peace and music at the Woodstock pop festival and yet nobody had been killed. Until I read these two books, that had never struck me as a particularly impressive claim. How often, after all, is anyone murdered at a chamber recital or raped at an oratorio? And if riots occasionally burst forth in the opera house, the principal wounds are usually to the soprano's *amour propre.* Yet Mr. Spitz and Mr. Sanchez, between them, persuade me that death's brief and accidental appearance at Woodstock (a 17-year-old boy was run over by a tractor) was indeed an achievement of sorts. It represented an improvement on the pop norm which, as represented here, seems to consist of early death, suicide, dishonesty and corruption accompanied by moral self-congratulation.

It is the financial vices which provide the staple of Mr. Spitz's book—a solidly researched corporate history of Woodstock. Mr. Spitz, however, has somewhat obscured its sober virtues under the gaudy trappings of the "New Journalism." He reports the private thoughts of all who were involved in organizing the festival and reconstructs long conversations at which he was not present. Accordingly, the narrative shifts disconcertingly between truth in the most literal sense (i.e. how many portable toilets were hired to accommodate progressive bottoms) and poetic or imaginative "truth" (i.e. in his report of one of those conversations he, himself, did not witness, ". . . the vacant smile on Howard's face had the lifeless quality of a wooden puppet.") Did it indeed? And if Howard had been someone of whom Mr. Spitz had a more favorable general opinion, might he not have been allowed a more charming smile? Such devices make the intelligent reader distrustful, which would be a pity here since much that Mr. Spitz records runs counter to his prejudices and so testifies to his honest intentions.

This history, unfashionably, has both a plot and a moral. The plot is borrowed from Restoration comedy and describes how two innocent young squires, just down from an Ivy League university and dazzled by the world of fashion, are flattered and swindled out of their inheritance by plausible rogues and dandies and end up poorer but wiser. It requires, of course, some imagination on the part of any normal person to see, for instance, Mr. Hugh Romney—the leader of a commune called (too truthfully) the Hog Farm, who traveled "dressed in a white nightgown and a Donald Duck aviator's cap"—as the glass of fashion and the mold of form. Yet those were the days when revolution and squalor were all the rage, indeed outward signs of inner cleanliness. Figures like Mr. Romney were, accordingly, virtual Beau Brummells from whom a raised eyebrow meant social death.

Certainly Mr. John Roberts and Mr. Joel Rosenmann—the Squire Truehart and Mr. Decent of this comedy—were nervously impressed by the pretensions of Pop and Hippiedom and longed to be accepted into that milieu. It seemed somehow purer, more noble and less compromised than their own wretched respectability. They were thus induced to put up a large fortune to finance the pop festival: compelled by their diffidence towards anyone wearing beads and a kaftan to watch colleagues and hangers-on squander vast portions on high living and pet projects, they were finally cheated out of any prospect of financial salvation when, through a mixture of whim and incompetence, the audience was admitted to the festival free of charge.

Alas for love and peace, the moral that emerges from Mr. Spitz's narrative is that the more untarnished someone's hippie credentials are, the more likely he is to be a crook. Mr. Abbie Hoffman, who for some years had thrown excrement at us with the highest motives, is shown here to be a common extortionist under all the blather. He demanded $50,000—and finally settled for $10,000—in return for promising not to disrupt the festival, a pledge which, in the end, he did not scrupulously observe:

> Before Lang could react, Abbie dashed across the stage . . . . 'This festival is meaningless as long as John Sinclair's rotting in prison,' Abbie screamed . . . blasted Townshend with a torrent of obscenities and ran screaming up the side of the hill . . . .

And Mr. Hoffman is merely the most thoroughgoing idealist. Except for some of the organizing technicians, whose professionalism demands respect, there are few honest and fewer likeable people in the Woodstock saga. Mr. Michael Lang, for instance, the festival's prime mover and presiding genius, is a model of lighthearted financial irresponsibility throughout. He forbids any attempt to collect tickets or even voluntary contributions from the audience on the grounds that "they're like groovin' on the vibes and you want to hit them with something like that! Don't be ridiculous."

But contrast this lofty attitude to his partners' solvency with the ruthless defense he mounts when his own financial interests are threatened. Along with Arte Kornfeld—together they are the

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Lawyer Avarice and Parson Sly of the Restoration comedy—he withheld his signature, needed for a financial settlement with the bank, until his partners, Mr. Roberts and Mr. Rosenmann, whose financial straits made the settlement imperative, had paid each of them $31,250 to dissolve the partnership. And when the company they had left clambered eventually, and unexpectedly, into the black, Avarice and Sly went ahead and sued their former partners anyway! Yet Mr. Lang prattles incessantly against the Establishment, the System, the pigs, etc., etc., etc. And, furthermore, his pieties are heard with respectful nods and solemn assent throughout.

There is also a typical Restoration subplot. It is designed to show the awfulness of those who tried to prevent the festival because they feared that it would disrupt their small, peaceful, happily backward communities. Here the author's prejudices do emerge. The festival's opponents are presented as the most wretched specimens—policemen with short hair, small-town housewives with an aversion to heroin, freaks of every kind. Mr. Spitz clearly wonders how they dare show their faces in polite society.

It is, alas, true that some of these concerned citizens (note the rare correct use of that phrase) were driven by despair into acts which no one can lightly gloss over—menacing telephone calls, threats to the lives of children of the organizers, etc. These things Mr. Spitz writes of with justified coldness. But what is nowhere explicitly acknowledged is that these Neanderthal monsters turned out to be entirely accurate in their predictions about the festival. Hard drugs were freely available; a serious epidemic was averted only by good luck; crops were trampled; mobs surged everywhere uncontrolled; violent riots took place; and much more besides.

Not that Mr. Spitz ignores the sins of the other side. He quotes a memorable description of the performers and organizers relaxing away from the grim squalor of love and peace in action:

> 'It was like a paradise,' she [Lee Mackler, a woman organizer] noted with amusement, 'the revolutionaries dining on T-bone steaks and French champagne . . . come Saturday or Sunday night, these people would change into their oldest torn jeans and sing to "the people" about poverty and starvation . . . . We had heard about the pitiful conditions out at the site, how the food was low, and the medical tents were bursting with patients, like a modern-day Gettysburg. But nobody gave a s--t. We were on an expense account, and that was really all that mattered to most of the people in that dining room.' [my bowdlerization]

Yet, in Mr. Spitz's otherwise frank narrative, those who opposed the prospect of riot and chaos, most of whom employed legal methods to do so, are subtly presented as somehow inferior to the peddlers of love and peace. Like poor Truehart and Decent, Mr. Spitz is half-captive to the modern notion that the bawdy vices are less culpable and deadly than the chill comforts of respectability.

Similar themes emerge from Mr. Sanchez's very different book—in effect, a valet's-eye-view of the Rolling Stones pop group. Mr. Sanchez, who, as an employee of guitarist Keith Richard, laid out heroin and cocaine each morning rather than the more tra-

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

The Third Party

"The world in *Falling in Place* is populated by those who are concerned with style, with artifice. Below the glittering, trendy façade, inside the pleasure palaces with walls built by the smoke of marijuana . . . there is a bankrupt world. Yet they keep spending to maintain the illusion. But as Ann Beattie shows, they are spending what would be the patrimony of the children.

At the end of a comedy, there is usually an epithalamium. In this world, the wedding song has a divorce as its prelude, and chances are, it will be a false wedding: it is so much more convenient to live together. And although it seems that some of the characters . . . will live happily ever after, the reality of their lives shows that for them, forever means until they change their minds."

—from "Our Poky Little Universe"
by Gary S. Vasilash

Also:
Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
Waste of Money—Perceptibles—The American Proscenium—Screen—Correspondence
Liberal Culture—Journalism

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ditional trousers and ties, writes racy and readable gossip. But a question at once arises: can an untrustworthy valet be a reliable witness? Three clues suggest so. Much of what he reveals is confirmed by occasional interviews with the Rolling Stones themselves, by other journalistic accounts and by the proceedings of police courts. Mr. Sanchez, secondly, does not fail to confess his own sins. And, finally, he provides what memory confirms to be an accurate picture of a particular time and place, "Swinging London" in the late 60's and later, a period in which the late Desmond Donnelly confided that his greatest fear was that "Britain will sink, giggling, into the sea."

A technical note, however, is in order here. Although the Rolling Stones defined as a musical group numbered five musicians, only three of them can be considered as a moral force in society: Mick Jagger, the group's singer and in time its acknowledged leader, Keith Richard and the late Brian Jones. Outside the concert hall and recording studio, the other musicians led respectable family lives and pursued such unrevolutionary hobbies as collecting U.S. Civil War memorabilia. Their snarls at society were like the groans and grimaces of professional wrestlers—undertaken in the interests of "image" to attract paying customers. But Messrs. Jagger, Richard and Jones saw themselves—and were seen by others—as leaders of a social revolution both onstage and off, defying Establishment taboos, pursuing happiness in the teeth of middle-class hypocrisy, inaugurating the new age of Youth.

Establishment boobies are popularly supposed to ask of such enterprises, "Where will it all end?" It ended, in this case, in drug addiction, physical squalor, moral callousness, sexual promiscuity and personal betrayal. Several episodes stick in the mind. Mr. Brian Jones abandoned his mistress and child in order to set up house with Miss Anita Pallenberg, a German starlet. When the discarded lady arrived on his doorstep to seek assistance, the two lovers hid behind the curtain and giggled uncontrollably. Under Miss Pallenberg's playful influence, Mr. Jones took to dressing up in nazi uniform and was photographed thus in the act of crushing a doll under his heel. But this idyll could not last. Soon Miss Pallenberg was giggling in the company of Keith Richard and Mr. Jones was forced to seek consolation in alcohol, drugs, crashing his Rolls-Royce, sharing his bed with two Lesbians and other distractions.

It is doubtful, however, if he fared worse than Mr. Richard, whose relationship with Miss Pallenberg survived. It was even blessed with children and became an unofficial family. We know this because, when Miss Pallenberg returned home from a trip abroad once, Mr. Richard unceremoniously turfed out a temporary mistress with the loyal words: "Sorry darling, but my family is important to me." Yet family life gradually changed into a black parody of domesticity—a joint retreat from society into a private world of drugs, physical neglect and the occult. This descent into the depths took place, paradoxically, against a background of high affluence. On one occasion Miss Pallenberg spent three weeks cloistered in a Swiss hotel suite, keeping maids and outsiders at bay, until finally Mr. Richard insisted that they move from the accumulated squalor to fresh quarters. Mr. Sanchez does not fail to tell us that the maids then fumigated the rooms.

Is it not desperately sad that young and attractive people should thus destroy their self-respect and any prospect of happiness? Such lives, moreover, seem doomed to be brief. Considering that Mr. Sanchez is writing about young people, death claims an extraordinarily large number of victims in his book. Brian Jones himself, possibly under the influence of drugs, was drowned in his swimming pool; Talitha Getty, a friend of the Stones and the daughter-in-law of Paul Getty, died of a massive heroin overdose; the author's mistress, a nightclub dancer named Madeleine, killed herself by repeatedly battering her head against the wall in a drug-induced frenzy; and many others in the close circle of friends and hangers-on around the group died mysterious, untimely or semiviolent deaths.

Only Mick Jagger seemed immune from these various consequences. He indulged himself dutifully in all the proper vices—but just short of the point where they might prevent him from arriving at rehearsals, or impair his songwriting, or depress his earnings. This sense of self-preservation was not confined to his business life. "Marry me here, and we'll sail away in a big white yacht and spend our lives making love and looking after our beautiful children," he appealed lyrically to his future wife, Bianca. Yet he was unsentimental enough to call off the wedding until the lady agreed, after a struggle, to a marriage contract that stipulated separate ownership of property. It is a reminder that successful hedonism requires self-discipline and a strong, even ruthless character. Not surprisingly, by the book's end, Mr. Sanchez is dismissing him as "just another millionaire businessman" who has abandoned the leadership of a social revolution and fallen in with fat-cat politicians.

There is in Mr. Sanchez's criticism an implication of reverse hypocrisy, as if Mr. Jagger is pretending to be wicked but is really being respectable all the time. My own interpretation, as above, is that Mr. Jagger is simply taking a long-term view of his own pleasures. Is there not some justice, however, in the notion that Messrs. Richard and Jones were being true to their public selves in a way that Mr. Jagger (and, even more so, the other suburban, nine-to-five social revolutionaries in the band) was not? After all, the songs of the Rolling Stones do not celebrate balance, caution, the felicific calculus or the virtue of deferred gratification. They preach revolution and the ethic of "I want it now." Their topics have included rape, pederasty, anarchism and drug-

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taking—none of them treated with conventional distaste, some with the ambiguity that dare not speak its name. An atmosphere of lurking violence and unrestrained sexuality hangs about their concerts, which often conclude with riots, assaults on the stage and injuries to the police. Indeed, at the notorious Altamont concert (where our old friend, Mr. Michael Lang, popped up as a "consultant"), amid the general mayhem a man was stabbed and clubbed to death by the Hell's Angels who had been hired to keep order. As Mr. Sanchez writes of that incident, "At Altamont there were no warmongers, no businessmen, no oldies—only the pure, bloody murderous reality of anarchy."

After such incidents it might seem that a period of silence from the Stones would be welcome. But towards warmongers (i.e. conventional politicians), businessmen and oldies they maintain an attitude of relentless moralism. "We have got them on the run now and we've got to finish what we started. The way things are run in Britain and the States is rotten . . ." lamented Mick Jagger in one such statement. Mr. Richard's protest took the existential form of getting drugged out of his mind. But Mr. Jagger seriously contemplated entering politics as a Labor candidate and had long talks to this end with the Labor Peer, Lord Bradwell, née Tom Driberg M.P.

The late Lord Bradwell was a figure not well known to Americans and, fortunately for his political career, not accurately known in his lifetime by the English either. Evelyn Waugh once complained that the newspaper description of him, following his first election to Parliament, as a "journalist and churchwarden" gave a very imperfect account of "that sinister character." Mr. Jagger could hardly have known his true political character and was apparently resistant to his sexual one. Still, there is a macabre propriety in the Rolling Stones receiving political advice and guidance from someone who was the inventor of the modern society gossip column, a Soviet fellow-traveler, a High Church Anglican ritualist and snob and a promiscuous homosexual with a taste for rough trade. Were they not allies in the same campaign, one spreading subtle poison inside the citadel, the others ululating threats outside the walls? □

Knowledge & Our Totalitarian Democracy

Thomas Sowell: *Knowledge and Decisions;* Basic Books; New York.

by Charles A. Moser

Knowledge and Decisions is judicious and well-argued, filled nearly to overflowing with sensible observations on our contemporary American political economy. The author, a faculty member at the University of California at Los Angeles and a man of standing in his field, explicitly acknowledges his intellectual debt to Friedrich von Hayek, among others, and chooses a down-to-earth quotation from Walter Lippman as the epigraph to the volume. And, although Sowell does not mention him, the reader may detect throughout the influence of the soberly empirical sociology school inspired by Edward Banfield. Banfield has termed *Knowledge and Decisions* a "remarkable book" in a very positive discussion of it published recently in *National Review.* Sowell belongs to a growing group of social scientists who assume that established social and cultural custom distills a genuine popular wisdom, and who seek to elucidate that wisdom instead of dismissing custom as an irrational social phenomenon.

If this book has a fault—aside from a few scattered points at which one might cavil—it lies in the abundance of its material, which sometimes obscures the outlines of the author's argument. It is divided into two sections: one on "Social Institutions," the other on "Trends and Issues." In the first section Sowell discusses the role of knowledge in the making of economic and political decisions, and the economic, social and political "trade-offs" which must also be recognized in reaching them. The second part consists of observations on historical trends in economics, law and politics, observations generally based on points which Sowell has made in the first section.

The richness of this book's substance is such as to make it quite impossible for a reviewer to deal with more than a few of the major strands running through it. Thus let's concentrate on Sowell's first point: the importance of knowledge in the making of social decisions, and, as a corollary, the role of intellectuals in our increasingly complex modern society.

He correctly maintains that the gathering and utilization of knowledge requires much effort in a centralized state: "knowledge can be enormously costly," he writes, "and is often widely scattered in uneven fragments, too small to be individually usable in decision-making. The communication and coordination of these scattered fragments of knowledge is one of the basic problems—perhaps *the* basic problem—of any society . . ." If this is so—and certainly American culture knows at least instinctively that it is, for otherwise we would not allocate immense sums each year to universities, institutes and public policy research centers—then a society must seek to economize on the costs of utilizing knowledge. This is why, Sowell points out, a culture "sorts" and "labels" individuals through such

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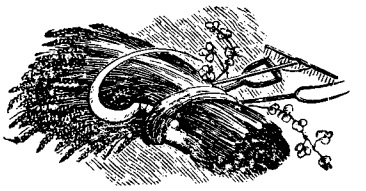
devices as the granting of academic degrees: a decision-maker has some justification for considering the holders of degrees on the whole superior to college dropouts. Though the generalization may not be valid in individual cases, it is usually not worth the additional cost of discovering which ones these are. Ideologies, Sowell notes, are another instrument by which a society may economize on the costs of gathering and utilizing knowledge.

Sowell understands very clearly that no matter how much knowledge a society may possess somewhere in its recesses, it must be made available at the proper time, in the proper form and at the proper point within the decision-making institutions of our society. In other words, there must be an effective mechanism for bringing ideas and knowledge to the attention of policy-makers as they are in the process of formulating decisions. Such establishments as the Brookings Institution have long provided liberal intellectuals with such a mechanism, one which specializes in the knowledge of where to bring knowledge to bear within the governmental structure. Only recently, with the founding of such organizations as The Heritage Foundation, have conservative intellectuals begun to match that capability and thereby to exercise greater influence upon the formulation of public policy.

In the contemporary world there are two principal ways of structuring a society: one relies upon economic transactions and the working of the market with numerous, semi-independent centers of authority and decision-making. The other is a political system, with fewer centers of decision-making, which produces decisions affecting great blocs of people and tends toward a hierarchical structure for the coordination of its activities. These two systems utilize entirely different methods of obtaining the information they require for decision-making. Under the economic system the information is transmitted in the



highly abstract and highly useful form of prices. Specific knowledge exists somewhere in the system, but no one person or group of persons needs to acquire much of it in order to make rational decisions. A political system which seeks to eliminate the market, however, relies upon "articulated" information in order to reach decisions. Sowell argues that the collection of all the articulated information which genuine "central planning" requires is a practical impossibility. In this area Sowell's arguments recall those of Paul Craig Roberts in his unjustly neglected books on the theory of planned economies. Contrary to the prevailing opinion of our day, the more complex a society becomes, the more essential it is that it be coordinated through the market mechanism, and the more impossible it is to direct it through political processes. This truth is slowly beginning to dawn on those responsible for the political management of the American economy; the recent airline deregulation is the fruit of that realization.

And yet many still press for the further extension of centralized political controls over our economy. Most of these are, in a word, "intellectuals." Intellectuals, as a budding social class, have largely seized control of the American political system; they have a vested interest in the articulation of knowledge which few can understand, as opposed to the transmission of knowledge through prices, which any dullard can comprehend. Intellectuals specialize in knowledge, or at least general ideas (Sowell fails to distinguish sufficiently between ideas and knowledge), and in the use of language for the articulation of knowledge and ideas. But while it is relatively easy to verify knowledge in most instances, by testing it against empirical reality, it is quite difficult to do this with ideas—particularly in the realm of the social sciences—and especially with whole systems of ideas combined into an ideology. Empirical reality is so complex that a skillful dialectician may successfully defend the "truth" of a social idea or theory against widespread assaults by simple reality.

As experts in the use of language, Sowell quite rightly points out, intellectuals may utilize the resources of language itself to sustain ideas which otherwise might not withstand empirical verification. He cogently inquires at one point: Shall decision-making be located in "an appointed judiciary influenced only by those particular viewpoints to [which] it is arbitrarily responsive (known as 'moral conscience') and arbitrarily oblivious to other views (known as 'public clamor')?" Later Sowell makes a similar argument in showing that fashionable intellectuals sustain their view that Third World nations are exploited by the developed world largely through the incantatory repetition of such phrases as "web of capitalism" and "imperialist network." Affective words and phrases have a powerful impact upon our perceptions, and therefore our decisions. In the final analysis they may be driven from the field only by words and phrases of equal or greater power.

From the use of affective phrases it is but a step to the blurring of any distinction between truth and falsehood, and from there to the straightforward and systematic lies upon which, as Solzhenitsyn reminds us, totalitarian systems must be based. In Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot,* a young radical tells Prince Myshkin that the strictly factual accuracy of information contained in a newspaper article should not be debated: what is important is the article's ideological and moral thrust. Sowell phrases it: "political truth is whatever will advance the interests of the cause or movement." He shows that the "instrumental" concept of truth has already profoundly affected our polity; the

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Warren Court's ruling against school segregation, for example, was based in large part upon a "study subsequently devastated as invalid, if not fraudulent." But since *Brown v. Board of Education* wrought such a profound revolution in our jurisprudence, it is almost unthinkable to question the validity of the "knowledge" which underlay that particular decision. Policy is more important than truth.

Sowell argues that intellectual manipulators of ideas have historically "promoted the abrogation of ordinary people's freedom, and romanticized despotism." He offers a brief history of the intellectuals' flirtations with despotism and then with totalitarianism through the ages, starting with a somewhat exaggerated indictment of early Christian intellectuals, then Chinese thinkers and others who sought to utilize the power of the state to impose upon all their version of the truth and their vision of the world. Intellectuals, he reminds us, fomented the French Revolution and later the October Revolution of 1917. Until rather recently in this country, we have been fortunate in that intellectuals enjoyed little influence within our governmental system. But now all that has changed, and the intellectual class has come to rule, and ruin, ever-greater areas of American life. Dissatisfied with the plodding ways of Congress, the most directly representative of our Federal institutions, the intellectuals have worked for the advancement of their objectives through the mammoth bureaucracy of the executive branch, which is often only nominally under the control of the president; through the bureaucracy of the independent regulatory agencies, to which the Congress has unwisely granted excessive authority; and most especially through the judiciary, the nearest thing to an independent and nonresponsible source of power in our democratic system. Thus it is not astonishing that young people who wish to change our society are flocking to law schools: they believe that they can realize their vision of the world through the relatively independent governmental agencies, and most especially through the courts (many of their colleagues flock to business schools, where they learn to live with the restrictions which the graduates of law schools will impose upon them).

Through the judiciary, primarily, there has come into being something Sowell speaks of as a "totalitarian democracy," in which the forms of democracy and the final authority of the people are preserved, but which in fact is governed by an "elite." "The history of trends in criminal law over the past generation," he observes, "is essentially the history of intellectual fashions among a small group of theorists in law and sociology." The same generalization may justly be made about the law in many other areas as well.

The conflict, then, runs between intellectuals who, like Sowell, are committed to empirically verifiable standards of truth, and those for whom the truth of an idea or the accuracy of a piece of knowledge must be subordinate to its likely political effects.

We need not delude ourselves. Intellectuals as a class have a vested interest in ideas which, whether true or false, promote their own well-being, and those ideas generally impel them toward the centralization of power in national and international government. In our supposedly free society, it is often very difficult for truly dissident ideas to gain a hearing, as people like Arthur Jensen have reason to know. And yet I believe and hope that Sowell is unduly pessimistic when, toward the end of his book, he writes that "almost by definition, the movement to totalitarianism is a one-way movement," and speaks of the power of that movement in our own society, for he also knows that "nothing is inevitable," in his words. Though ideas are the stock-in-trade of intellectuals, intellectuals are also men, men who may, sometimes for obscure reasons, suddenly reject that which until yesterday they took for granted. The very appearance of *Knowledge and Decisions* and similar works of recent years, coupled with a pervasive sense of liberal malaise, may be the harbinger of an intellectual reversal of significant proportions which would restore to us our commitment to truth rather than political expediency. But that is something which, as Sowell comments on his book's last page, "only the future can tell." □

In the Mail

Solzhenitsyn at Harvard **edited by Ronald Berman; Ethics and Public Policy Center; Washington, D.C.** Solzhenitsyn's Harvard address, said to be his most provocative utterance about the West, along with twelve early responses and six later reflections.

Privatization: Theory & Practice **by T. M. Ohashi and T. P. Roth; The Fraser Institute; Vancouver, Canada.** An examination of property rights transferral schemes which involve distributing free shares in private and public enterprises.

An Inventory of State and Local Income Transfer Programs **by William J. Lawrence and Stephen Leeds; The Institute for Socioeconomic Studies; White Plains, New York.** A study of government income transfer programs for fiscal year 1977.

The Family, the Natural Environment of the Child; **centro internazionale studi famiglia; Milan, Italy.** Proceedings of cisf's 1979 International Congress in Milan, including the main papers, communications, seminar reports and conclusions of the Congress. This is the contribution of the cisf to the International Year of the Child.

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Ariadne Without a Clew of Thread

Nina Schneider: *The Woman Who Lived in a Prologue;* Houghton Mifflin Co.; Boston.

by Edward J. Walsh

Toward the end of this flamboyant testament to contemporary feminism as the source of spice in a woman's life, the narrator, now an elderly woman, is sitting in the garden of her estate in May, apparently enjoying the sights and sounds of spring. But wait! In her hand she holds a copy of *Village Voice.* Isn't that a bit much, we wonder, for a woman raised in a devoutly traditional Jewish home, steeped in her family's ancient heritage, educated in Shakespeare, who married her father's choice of a husband? *Village Voice?*

The Woman Who Lived in a Prologue is the saga of Ariadne, daughter of immigrant Jews, a fanciful but scatterbrained woman who finds her life somehow incomplete, almost from her earliest childhood. She marries Adam, a dutiful, albeit stiffly formal, fellow, when their unromantic courtship is forced to betrothal after they are trapped together overnight by a snowstorm. Adam is determined to vindicate her honor before her father, although it was never compromised. They marry to satisfy convention rather than love, and convention—the often tyrannical arbiter of what is expected of men and women—becomes Ariadne's lifelong enemy.

Schneider's technique might be called the impassioned flashback. Her heroine tells her life story from the perspective of grandmotherhood. It is the story of her staunchly defended teen-age virginity, her reluctant marriage, her early abortion and her subsequent four children. She dwells, in the early years, on the cold and sterile relationship with husband Adam—it was he, after all, who while out of a job suggested her abortion. From this we may infer that Ariadne the submissive wife is forced by her chauvinistic dictatorial husband to have the operation. But her accusation is broader than that: not Adam, but the patriarchal structure of traditional middle-class society that frowned on the appearance of hard times that the child would create, is the villain. The abortion itself is a trivial aside.

Ariadne's sullenness increases over the years of life with Adam and their four kids, and, embroidered in Schneider's colorful prose, becomes the essence of the novel. The book focuses on sexuality—the routineness and loneliness of it with Adam, and then, after twenty years of marriage, the enraptured splendor of sex with Paul, whom she meets at an art class in which Adam urges her to enroll. Adultery becomes her, makes her exciting, dynamic and interesting, if not happy:

> Gratified sensuality has not brought peaceful sleep. We have carried it like a wasting illness; I have known diffuse, bone-aching fevers, freezes, pains, nights of boil, bubble, scum. But in its energy, self-love, self-searching, its fierceness, its insistence, even in its unhappy-ever-after, it penetrated the impalpable chaos. Even in its firm disillusionment, it balanced existence.

Impalpable chaos—to Ariadne, it includes not just heartbreak and hardship, the fathomless confusion that all human beings find interrupting their lives, but rather her entire life as a somewhat average person. She lives well, is blessed with children, prestige, opportunity for cultural enrichment—yet her outlook on life is overwhelmed by her hatred of her husband's aloofness and scrupulously correct intellectuality. Her life is plumbed by tragedy—the death of one son and the insanity of another—but these blows are no more than incidental to the gnawing confusion and emptiness she endures—because of her husband's coldness, we surmise.

But the real reason is that she can't find the time to write her book.

It may be a universal law that people who believe they have a great novel gestating inside them are the most tiresome of souls. That precept is buttressed by Ariadne, who "lives in a prologue," that is, dallies through her life into dotage before taking up pen and telling the story of a life marked by events and circumstances that seem tailor-made as the stuff of interesting, "relevant" contemporary fiction. The oppressive traditional childhood, the domineering husband, the abortion, the loss of sons, the art studies and finally the love affair and world travel—ingredients for a story, to be sure, but one that has really missed the relevancy boat, since radical feminism is already on the skids in the United States.

Indeed, the winds of liberal change that huffed in the radical causes of the 70's have shifted markedly. The Equal Rights Amendment is stalled. Articles are being published with titles like "The New Chastity," and, in the world of business, career women seem to be thinking twice about accepting transfers away from their spouses. Feminists are on the defensive in state legislatures and in the U.S. Congress. The sexual revolution, having scarred many lives, is receding.

So Mrs. Schneider's frenetic novel will not share bookstore display cases with Germaine Greer—if that lady's depressing tomes can still be found anywhere. Ariadne's flashbacks are too neatly cast in the dim light of the Tortured Consciousness of the 60's and 70's. Her escapade in Canada as an accomplice of her grandson, who is evading the Vietnam draft, is just silly. Her endless self-analysis, jumping back and forth between first- and third-person

Mr. Walsh is a frequent contributor to these pages.

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narration, is by now trite, suggesting as it does a waif crying out for est or holistic ego immolation. By the time the doting Ariadne reaches for her *Village Voice,* she is more a caricature than an aspiring author who can't find the time to write. As a woman who seems to know less about life as she grows older, Ariadne finally admits that even as a grandmother she is still "groping for a way out from my center to a continuity." That kind of expression is more common to Marin County garden parties than to an agonizing writer's garret.

But there is more than pathetic sadness to a character like Ariadne, who leaps at faddish psychology with more than a touch of spiritual desperation. There is ugliness, too, shown in her poisoning her daughter's Mongoloid child hours after its birth and in her rationalization of her act, years later, by an allusion to weeding her garden. Jeremy, her lifelong obstetrician-soulmate, gently demurs—but then performs the abortion of the child she conceives by her lover Paul. Jeremy is pitched as a man of restrained, genteel wisdom, who keeps the reins of reason on Ariadne's unruly, romantic nature. But his kind of discipline is jellylike, mildly regretful of the evil in which she indulges, but indignant, not to say angry, at nothing.

Schneider leads us to a conclusion that reaches for the heights of feminist melodrama. Can Ariadne, after the many hurts, traumas and injustices inflicted upon her—first by traditional society and its values, and second, by her own emotional excesses that were escapes from convention to which she was tragically driven—begin anew? Her next incarnation will be as author, setting down, for the sake of her sanity and that of future generations of escaping housewives, the tricks she has learned in a lifetime of moral confusion. The book, we are told, will release her from her lifelong prologue. The flashbacks flicker rapidly back and forth: she debates contemporary attitudes about sex with her grandchildren—how's that for a grandma? Her target is exclusively the plight of the married woman: trapped and oppressed by her womb, her emotions, her needs:

> To the very end life seems to force upon women a morality of abnegation; a giving up of the personal, whether of sensuality, or ease, or creative fulfillment. There are no sanctified cop-outs. A child's cry of need has the power to recall a woman from her deepest sleep, her most vivid dreams to her specific domestic responsibility. In taking responsibility for my anarchist grandson, I was defending the order of the generations. I was acknowledging my link with nature, as well as with civilization.

Nina Schneider is a doctor's wife, a college graduate who has spent her life writing poetry, producing films, and, no doubt, keeping her finger on the pulse of chic and chatty developments in the women's movement. Her biographical blurb proudly announces that "At last count there were seven Schneider grandchildren," and one is forced to wonder, after reading Mrs. Schneider's book, if that is said with tongue in cheek. Why would a woman who is proud of her family write a novel about woman's "morality of abnegation"? Perhaps the book is a triumph over the old saw about art imitating life, but I don't think so. Ariadne is not nearly as oppressed as she complains, and in real life, one would hardly think Mrs. Schneider considers her life arduous. One suspects that the book is contrived—after all, tales of rebellious housewives are hot stuff these days, in certain circles.

There is something unreal about Mrs. Schneider's book, even as she has tried mightily to say something profound about Life and Woman. She is right when she says, simply, that a child's cry will awaken a mother, but she says it as if men had nothing to do with providing for the needs of children—and wives. Resentment is fashionable in the women's movement; indeed, the movement feeds on resentment. If Mrs. Schneider sat down to write her novel late in life, it's most likely because she spent too much time brooding over what to say in it. The theme of *The Woman Who Lived in a Prologue* has been done before. It doesn't improve with age. □

Lips Sealed or Alluringly Parted?

Malcolm Cowley: *The Dream of the Golden Mountains, Remembering the 1930's;* Viking Press; New York.

by Otto J. Scott

The side flap of the dust jacket shows an 82-year-old patriarch with snowy hair and a benign expression, wearing the usual mismatched tie and shirt of the very old. The jacket cover shows a larger picture of the same man probably forty years ago, looking young, naive and pleasant. Somewhere behind both pictures hovers the real Malcolm Cowley—a presence once highly celebrated, Lord High Pooh Bah of *The New Republic* when that publication and *The Nation* were twin eminences, judas goats for an entire generation of American intellectuals who had been lured into the dead-end runways of Comintern politics and communist exegeses of all events.

The naive might anticipate an apologia of sorts, or a bristling defense of long-exploded arguments. Cowley is far too talented and persuasive for that. He has not chosen to deny so much as to ignore much of the past, and, with disarming skill and considerable grace of

Mr. Scott's latest book is The Secret Six: John Brown and the Abolitionist Movement.

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style, tone and manner, to replay the melodies of brotherhood, peace and good will that once beguiled a generation. To do this, Cowley has had to restore the feeling of the Depression—the crushing sense that people were going hungry across the land, a third of the nation's work force rendered idle—when most Americans were bewildered and bereft. He does this hypnotically well; none who recall the 1930's will argue with Cowley's memory in this respect. His own activities in these years are modestly presented in a way that readers will find most attractive. Cowley's manners are impeccable. There are no exchanges where he overwhelms with his wit; he does not face down bullies nor brag about his adventures in bed. None of the dreadful and embarrassing posturings so common to recent literature mar this elegiac and evocative account of a vanished time in this land.

This tone is established early and maintained with skill throughout. Not all of the 1930's are recalled, of course. It was a turbulent and crowded period, and its last half was little short of disastrous for the views that Cowley had so well—and so often—expressed in its first half. The account of these years is, understandably, somewhat short: the elegant walker steps over some sharp crevices toward the end. It is mainly the period from 1930 to 1936 that is recreated from Cowley's recollections and notes. These can be assumed to be reliable, since the author was a professional writer and a part of the political literati throughout a long and eminent career. It is well to remember, however, that this career is not yet over. Cowley has lived a long time, seen and dealt with many prominent persons. *The Dream of the Golden Mountains* ends over forty years ago, when he had many more experiences to live and observations to make. We may, therefore, eventually see a second installment in the form of a long rerun of a celebrated and crowded life, as in the instance of Malcolm Muggeridge and other recent, prolific autobiographers.

That expectation is strengthened by the fact that Cowley's first book of recollections appeared in 1934, when the writer was only 36. *Exile's Return* was probably the first book about the American literary coterie in Paris during the 20's. Literary figures like Hemingway, Henry Miller and F. Scott Fitzgerald were described in a series of charming vignettes. Cowley was also among the first to claim that he and his peers were victims of the world; that they had been uprooted by a senseless war, and were therefore uniquely lost among generations. That argument, as familiar today as automobiles and advertising, was not—in 1934—sympathetically received. Lewis Gannett, the book critic at the *New York Herald-Tribune,* sourly commented upon "a little group of serious-thinking drunkards," and William Soskin in *The American* said, "Mr. Hemingway is growing dim. So are his colleagues." Younger critics were far more kind: they were contemporaries of Hemingway et al., and admired their experiences. Time was to prove that Cowley had pioneered a literary genre that became a virtual industry—but that was later. In the early 30's Cowley's major accomplishment was his ability not only to blend into the New York scene, but also to become a totemic leader and spokesman for the intellectual followers of the Communist Party line. This phase of Cowley's career began when he was hired, three weeks before the October crash in Wall Street, by *The New Republic.* The publication was "safe in its subsidy," says Cowley, and "everyone felt sure of his job and hardly anyone was angling for a better one." It was, he says, "like a family."

Cowley was, of course, very lucky. The job paid $100 a week to start—at a time when most men's wages were to fall to something like $700 or $800 a year, average, $100 a *month* was to be considered good for several years. He seems to have fit in perfectly at *The New Republic:* within a fairly short time he had moved upstairs and in a few years was a very influential book critic and general contributor, as well as a member of the inner circle titularly headed by Bruce Bliven. His salary, one assumes, moved upward: he makes it clear that Willard Straight's widow, with Whitney money of her own plus whatever was inherited from the Morgan partner, did not stint.

It would be fascinating to know whom Cowley met and how he, Edmund Wilson and their associates were swept into the Comintern orbit—but that information is, alas, not in *The Golden Mountains.* Instead, we are deftly turned toward a fascinating byway involving Cowley's first wife, Peggy Baird, and her trip to Mexico for a divorce. The curtain is parted a bit at this juncture, and mutual infidelities are admitted. We follow Cowley into speakeasies and Peggy into a weird affair in Mexico with bisexual Hart Crane, who committed suicide by jumping overboard on the voyage home. Other descriptions, equally interesting, flow in and around this dramatic digression: we catch glimpses of Edmund Wilson traveling across the depressed American landscape to send back superb descriptions; we see a young Martha Gellhorn careless of detail and the density of John Dewey's prose. The tone is literary and worldly, somewhat aloof and sophisticated, but compassionate and concerned all at the same time. There is much about writing as a following. "It was," says Cowley, "my field, and I was concerned with everything in it, from the commas before a nonrestrictive clause to the status of the literary profession and the right way of managing the climax of a novel."

Cowley recreates the thesis, current at the time, that writers should be "spokesmen" for a new and better society. The time was ripe for "radical

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social experiment" and efforts to "take communism away from the communists." If that was the goal, however, it was obliquely approached, for what Cowley actually did was to join the party in spirit and deed—at least in terms of speaking, signing ads and petitions and in his agreement with its principles and tactics—without actually accepting a card and paying dues. This technicality maintained, it is presumed, the cloak of objectivity which journalists then claimed to wear.

The transformation of the *boulevardier* of Paris into the fervent anticapitalist New Yorker is described by Cowley as essentially religious in tone and impact: he cites St. John of the Cross and other familiar Christian symbols, and even recalls that he and some of his companions discussed the replacement of Christianity with its heretical, bastard offspring in all seriousness. This argument is skillfully pursued; Cowley is a careful and adroit stylist who does not grow turgid, does not bore. Some of his evocations are first-rate; particularly good are those of his trips to the country and a few weeks spent in the South with cousins of Allen Tate and the agrarian circle which produced *I'll Take My Stand.* He speaks very warmly of these true heirs of America's real lost generation, though he cannot repress comments about the plight of sharecroppers and some mild ironies of the usual New England sort. Sandwiched between these humane and even slightly poetic touches are rapid, brief descriptions of party struggles, of rebukes by the comrades which "amused" and "assured one of his standing," and of various rallies, causes and the rise of New Deal factotums—some associated with *The New Republic.* Comrades-in-arms are warmly praised; virtually nobody appears whom Cowley admits to disliking. Clifford Odets, James T. Farrell, Granville Hicks, Philip Rahv—all sorts of well-known figures are held aloft for an illuminating and friendly moment, with no hint of their later vicissitudes, *in which Cowley's activities played an exacerbating role.* There is virtually no hint of this in Cowley's retrospective; he bathes himself and his former associates in a golden afterglow of beautiful dreams. But the reality was far different, far less flattering to Mr. Cowley, and far more damaging to this nation and its people than he is ever likely to admit.

For a realistic understanding of the years Cowley claims to recall, and to assess the importance of the tide of hatred for traditional America and all its values that poured from *The New Republic,* one has to turn to a more objective, less involved, historian. Fortunately, one is available. James J. Martin produced, in 1964, a meticulous, detailed, documented, two-volume analysis *(American Liberalism and World Politics;* Devin; New York; 1964) of *The New Republic* and *The Nation* and their impact upon foreign policy and the course of the United States during the 1930's, as well as of the activities of Malcolm Cowley and his coterie. Turning to these pages, we meet a Cowley who held the U.S.S.R. and its interests above all others. We see a Cowley who traveled to Spain during its civil war and whose lips remained sealed regarding the atrocities of the OGPU in Barcelona and Madrid, the presence of Soviet officers in that struggle, and the realities of the issues. Even in *Golden Mountains,* with its numerous copyright dates indicating God-only-knows-what hesitations, redrafts, erasures and improvements ranging from 1964 through 1980, we do not learn that Cowley has fundamentally changed his mind from the attitude revealed in his partisan accounts of that period. We discover the past Cowley fighting one and all in a series of savage critiques of the revelations of Soviet refugees. We find him unwilling to criticize the Soviet purges no matter how grotesque and chilling they became. It was his contention then that those who confessed did so voluntarily because they were guilty (Koestler theorized it was for the good of the Party and the future of communism, a close cousin in thought); Cowley believed the purgees deserved what they received. We discover in Martin's monumental volumes that Mr. Cowley's memory, which is remarkable enough to recall the scenery and the feel of a single summer's day and the look and mood of a *New Republic* dinner cooked on the magazine premises and served by a butler, is faulty enough to forget the damage done to James T. Farrell by the ideological wars in which Cowley was the leader, and to forget a great many other, even larger, calamities.

We are, in other words, confronted with a charming series of literary veronicas and other dazzling displays of cape-and footwork. This is not unprecedented. Readable autobiographies are notoriously bad history and excellent rationalizations. The political and literary historians of the future will enjoy picking through Cowley's artful account, for most of his anecdotes make excellent reading. There is no question about Cowley's ability; his argument that he had a golden dream of a better world is an appealing one. It does not, however, make intellectual sense that a dream should lead a man to despise his own nation and accept foreign despotism. Cowley's skill almost enables him to succeed; he presents his dream so well that it becomes, in fact, an appeal for others to adopt that dream. By this performance Cowley seeks to absolve himself, and sets a trap for the unwary and the unsophisticated. He does not need to go very far; many illustrious persons have briefly been attracted to the false god of communism and turned away when they were close enough to see its hideous vis-

"It was an honorable and inspiriting dream . . . and nothing that befell it has made it vulnerable to derision . . ."

—The New Republic

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age. Most, with no illustrious exception that comes readily to mind, honestly admitted their error and warned others against taking their former path. Cowley has chosen, instead, to use all his skills to gild himself in retrospect. Since he obviously has more to say, one looks forward to further volumes of clever examples of *trompe l'oeil* from the former president of the National Institute of Arts and Letters and the former chancellor of the even more august American Academy of Arts and Letters—and the former literary analyst and political prognosticator of *The New Republic.* □

Bridge over the River Why

Mortimer J. Adler: *How to Think About God: A Guide for the 20th-Century Pagan;* Macmillan; New York.

by James V. Schall

The first "How to" book by Mortimer Adler I ever read was when I was a freshman at the University of Santa Clara, where some optimistic mystic assigned *How to Read a Book.* At the time, in skeptical youth, it seemed equivalent to a course a friend took at Loyola University on "How to Use the Telephone." Until I read about how to read, I had thought I had no problems with reading. On the other hand, as Adler pointed out in his book, I had not been comprehending much either.

Adler's next book was *How to Think About War and Peace.* Here, I knew there was some kind of problem, a problem on which we are still thinking about "How to." And now we have *How to Think About God,* about whom, of course, I have tried to think, as a good (or, especially, bad) Christian is admonished to do. In a sense, like the God of the *Apocalypse,* I felt, in considering these three Adler books, that the First was also contained in the Last and the Last in the First, whereas War and Peace were obscure issues on which the pure philosopher could not shed much light, especially if he thought God cared a whit for our lethal squabbles. Thus, "To acknowledge God's omnipotence and omniscience . . . is not to be assured that God is concerned with our conduct or cares what happens to us." This is why, though he cannot exactly prove it, Professor Adler never hints that we ought *not* to read à Kempis.

And so for all its rigors in a world lacking in grace and revelation, philosophy *ut sic* turns out to be rather a dull enterprise indeed. Not even the atheists bother, for the passionate attacks of these latter "are never directed against the God of the philosophers, but against the God of religious faith." We can only blame another when we "know" *our* personal condition has a personal cause outside ourselves. Atheism is necessarily, in this sense, a morality of blaming what is not oneself. Thus, the City of God is not built for philosophers. Yet, on whether there even "be" a God, on that philosophers can diligently expend their energies building bridges over the why of it all.

The "particular" reason, I am tempted to suggest here, for the singular, concrete existence of Mortimer Adler, philosopher and pagan, who belongs to the class "man" though still unique unto himself, is, no doubt, that at least once in the history of this "possible," now-existing universe, there could "exist" in fact at least one philosopher, freed from the theological horizons, who could, if not "demonstrate," at least "persuade" us with correct thought that "Yes, Virginia, there *is* a God" but no "mermaids."

This event, this particular cosmic reason, in any case, has now occurred with the publishing of *How to Think About God.* As P. G. Wodehouse once said, "improbability is *not* impossibility." For those of us, however, brought up on Plato and Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Gilson, Pieper and Maritain, on logic and metaphysics, on analogy and transcendence, this book is both a delight and a refreshment. It is almost like discovering old friends whose existence is more difficult to prove than even that of God. The human mind is made to think. This is, as Aristotle said, its own proper delight. Alas, we have lived in a world in which so very few know this particular kind of "How to." Mortimer Adler, we cannot doubt, knows how to think. And he does not hesitate to pay the reader the honor of carefully identifying, explaining, pointing to, abstracting, reflecting, arguing, concluding, repeating, rethinking, concluding again. The essence of his book is to reject the traditional "proofs" for the existence of God, either as invalid (Anselm, Kant) or as presupposing inadvertently theology (Aquinas). But Adler does not intend to violate the Decree of Vatican I, which held that God's existence *could* be demonstrated with certainty by human reason itself. What Professor Adler denies is rather that any proof given so far has so proved God's existence.

After a lifetime of reflection, Mortimer Adler now thinks that he has such a demonstration. He thinks by virtue of rigorous argument that his "proof" is rather "persuasive" at least, although, as he says at the end of his proof, he has "reasonable grounds for affirming God's existence," yet "each reader must *decide* for himself whether or not he is *willing* to make a statement to the same effect." Obviously, if after elaborate "proof" it is still a question of "willing," then either the proof is less than "proof" or we have a reader who "neither knows God nor seeks him." Essentially, Adler's demonstration is a revision of the old question of the "futurables" and the "possibles." On the basis of the fact that this particular and existing universe as a whole

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changes, that it could be otherwise, it is possible but not necessary that this or some other universe exists. On this question of many possible universes, Adler sounds like no one so much as C. S. Lewis or J. R. R. Tolkien in their travel and space stories. The comparison is not merely playful; I sometimes wonder if, on this account, Adler was as free of theology as he thought. In any case, his proof "persuades"; his passage from thought to existence accepts the basis of Aquinas's notion that somewhere in the argument we must begin, or at least contain, something that does exist (in this present case) with the whole cosmos.

Adler is careful to avoid the problem found in Anselm and his followers of wanting to "prove," on the basis of God's existence, the content of Revelation. There is no mere rationalist here! To be able to "prove" Revelation, of course, would be to make our intellects not analogously like God's, as the argument requires, but equivalent to his. This would mean that reality must not be a gift but a "justice," the most terrible of the world-exalting theories, no doubt. Only God can know God, which means, ultimately, that what is not God ought to be content with being "a little less than the Angels." But, of course, it is not, so that the natural desire of the supernatural does not seem to allow philosophers to be, in desire, at least, only philosophers. Was it not Plato who suggested that if this gap is to be bridged, it could only come from the side of the Good?

John Paul II, whose work in many ways parallels Adler's (cf. the Pope's *The Acting Person,* his discourse of November 17, 1979 on Aquinas) would like this book, I think. The Holy Father is interested especially in a true philosophy which, while remaining philosophy, does not methodologically or voluntarily cut itself off from "the act of existing," so that if God does speak "existentially" true philosophy can at least *will* to listen or, to be sure, *not* to listen.

"Simply put," Leopold Tyrmand remarks:

> Thomism leads to a theory of human liberty that is entitled to distinguish between the absolute and the dogmatic in matters of faith, and firmly rejects determinist philosophies, such as Marxism.
>
> Cardinal Wojtyla belongs to that group of Catholic theorists who have early found a striking relevance of St. Thomas's thought to the 20th Century's sociopolitical reality. *(Wall Street Journal,* December 6, 1978).

Mortimer Adler's reflections on God serve to remind us that behind any defensible social theory lies metaphysics and its relation to revelation. The ultimate errors of social philosophy lie deeper than social philosophy. Mortimer Adler, then, as he himself acknowledges, remains precisely a "20th - Century Pagan," or, as Rosalind Murray called her father, Gilbert, "The Good Pagan." Adler knows what the revelation *teaches* in terms of being, even if he cannot believe it: grace is not to be commanded. Adler's philosophy does not conclude that *He Who Is* cannot, in principle, act towards the wills and intelligence of the persons who do exist (concrete persons, not abstract persons).

Gilson, whom Adler often cites with great respect, remarked in his "Future of Augustinian Metaphysics," that there was a way to God through the real existence of the contingent, concrete person, the real existing Augustine. Gilson noted that this concrete person, Augustine, was the most immediately real thing there was to any philosopher. Adler does not mention Gilson's essay on St. Augustine, but while he was arguing against Aquinas's proof from contingency he seemed to want such a proof. Perhaps, then, Augustine, whom Aquinas cited so often, is the real place to go before we reject so finally the "proof" of Aquinas. And Aquinas does, after all, say he is "demonstrating" at least *that* God is, in his proofs.

Chesterton somewhere talks about a certain Mr. Grant Allen, who once wrote a book against the existence of God. Chesterton remarked that he would much prefer to read a book by God on the existence of Mr. Grant Allen. Mortimer Adler is neither God nor Mr. Grant Allen, but, after finishing his remarkable book, we can more easily think about both, if we *will.* From the God of the philosophers to the God of the revelation there perhaps are no final "bridges," as Mr. Adler says, but the revelation, as it presents itself, does also address the philosopher. For all his carefulness, Mortimer Adler remains a Thomist *and* a pagan—someone who may not hear, but someone whose system does not prevent others from hearing the reasons why. □

Liberal Culture

Gannett's Pantheon

A midwestern Gannett "family" newspaper teaches the new generation about America's hallowed past. Under the title "Get to Know Revolutionary War Figures" are listed George and Thomas and Benjamin and John and Abigail and Citizen Paine and Marquis de L. and Betsy Ross. Who's missing? Of course, old Alexander, that unrepentant reactionary, who saw action in the line of fire, unlike the good progressive Paine, who wrote but never fought. Who fills in for Mr. Hamilton in Gannett's pantheon? Ms. Deborah Sampson, who as described by Gannett's historians:

> wore a soldier's uniform and passed as a man for almost two years to help the Revolution. She was shot in the leg but removed the bullet herself so she could continue fighting. □

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Wien, Wien, nur Du allein . . .

Carl E. Schorske: *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna; Politics and Culture;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Paul Gottfried

Carl Schorske, an historian of the pre-World War I German Socialist Party, has never hidden his radical-left sympathies. During the Reagan administration, he left a professorship at Berkeley to take a more lucrative post at Princeton; the reason he loudly proclaimed for the job change was his fear of "repressive politics." In acknowledging the debts incurred while constructing his book, he lists academics who seem generally in tune with his views: Norman O. Brown, radical sexologist, Arno Mayer, Princeton historian and a central European Marxist-Leninist, and William McGrath, a University of Rochester professor of German history who has fared remarkably well among a number of Marxist-leaning colleagues.

Despite these immaculately proper acknowledgments, Schorske travels light in this book, without ideological baggage. His essays on late 19th-century Vienna are done with sensitivity and polish. His attempt to link Viennese artistic and intellectual productivity to a crisis of self-rejection among the Austrian bourgeoisie yields occasionally profound insights. The city of Vienna even today remains largely an architectural monument erected by such 19th-century designers as Otto Wagner and Theophil Hansen. It was intended as a continuing testimony to the ascendancy of the Austrian middle class. The parliament and other government buildings, the theaters and museums, and, above all, the sumptuous Ringstrasse, with its proliferating gardens and apartments, point back to an era of municipal self-confidence and to the coming of age of central Europe's bankers, industrialists and professional class. Parliamentary government, the abolition of aristocratic privilege and the proclamation of religious freedom in the Danubian monarchy were all developments which the middle class sought, then welcomed when they came. From a defender of the Counter Reformation church and bureaucratic absolution, the Hapsburg dynasty became a protector of religious minorities (like the Jews), while furnishing honors for self-made men.

Nonetheless, serious problems wracked the empire and brought doubt to the middle class about the preservation of its way of life. Ethnic minorities grew restive in a multinational state. The Czechs and Austro-Germans used the Imperial Diet to denounce each other; they and other nationalities took to describing the Hapsburg monarchy as a "prison house." To this ferment among nationalities was added the specter of class struggle. The socialist movement, with its proletariat base and Marxist principles, called for the eradication of capitalist institutions. It, too, identified the state as a repressive instrument, a vestige of the feudal past which had been converted into a bulwark of middle-class dominance. Finally, politicians like the Viennese mayor Karl Lueger tried to exploit rising anti-Semitism in the city's working-class population, which was their reaction against the numerous Jewish capitalists among the rising Austrian and Hungarian bourgeoisie. Combining anti-Jewish and anti-Slavic rhetoric with a program of social welfare, Lueger got himself elected mayor in the 1890's, much to the horror of both the Hapsburgs and the educated middle class. As mayor he proved to be conciliatory and civic-minded, although, as Schorske points out, his campaigning gave evidence of "politics in a new key."

According to Schorske, the cultural modernism that emerged from *fin-de-siècle* Vienna dramatized the cumulative impact of these attacks on bourgeois society. The 19th-century bourgeoisie had staked its future on the principles of orderly economic development, constitutional monarchy and individual freedom. The forces that rose to challenge it in the Hapsburg state were collectivist, atavistic and violence-prone. The intellectual and cultural achievements that accompanied this challenge stressed human irrationality and the brittleness of civilization.

Schorske skillfully reveals the common ground among a wide variety of Austrian cultural innovators. These include Arnold Schoenberg, twelve-tone composer, Oskar Kokoschka, expressionist artist, Sigmund Freud, father of psychoanalysis, Arthur Schnitzler, naturalist playwright, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, enterprising lyrical librettist for Richard Strauss's operas. Without trying to ignore their intellectual differences, he views their work as a body of related responses to an already-threatened standard of rationality and political order. Such responses came in varied forms, from von Hofmannsthal's cult of beauty and his call for an "esthetic counterrevolution" to Schoenberg's musical experimentation to Freud's study of primeval psychic drives. Schorske applies the same analytical framework in assessing the political trends of the period. Looking at Austro-German and other ethnic secessionists, socialists, political anti-Semites and Zionists, he finds a common link in their rejection of a multinational empire based on economic and dynastic ties and on bourgeois civilities.

Yet, ironically, almost all these critical responses came from middle-class figures. Not all these critics were determined to destroy their society, and at least some personalities whom Schorske analyzes—e.g. Schnitzler, Freud and von Hofmannsthal—were passionately devoted to its maintenance.

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Nonetheless, they all perceived their class and its verities as threatened, even doomed, and searched for their own alternatives and solutions to the existing order. Perhaps it is impossible to do justice in a brief review to Schorske's analysis, which is rich in illustrations and far removed from the simplistic reductionism so often endemic to Marxists and radical historians. Its one limitation, however, is implicit in the perspective from which Schorske approaches his subject: it is a diagnostic view of a terminally ill patient. Of course, we all know that the Hapsburg Empire came to an end in 1918 following a disastrous war, and that during and after the Second World War most of its former territories were overrun by one or more totalitarian powers. Yet there was nothing inescapable about this dénouement; without such unforeseeable historical contingencies as the Archduke's assassination or Germany's defeat in 1918, the Hapsburg Empire might still be around in spite of its internal divisions. In my opinion, most studies of the Austro-Hungarian Empire gave too much emphasis to doom. This could be attributed to their authors' awareness of the ultimate disasters that await the subject, but the historian's task is not to sing in the chorus of an ancient Greek tragedy, where all things are fated from the outset. Rather, he must try to comprehend the political choices and spiritual horizons that were, or seemed to be, open to men in past ages.

From this perspective, *fin-de-siècle* Viennese culture revealed, not a dying bourgeois society, but the fullest flowering of the European middle class. Associating itself with aristocratic and monarchical institutions, yet proud of its own material and educational achievements, the Viennese *Bürgerstand,* as Schorske shows, gave birth to an artistically and intellectually brilliant civilization. It enjoyed, moreover, the support of many of those whom he cites as being among its subverters. Freud and Schnitzler called attention to those biological and natural forces which they saw as operative in their society, but both men were thoroughly committed to upholding bourgeois civility and the empire. In this respect they differed markedly from our own decayed bourgeois, who draw sustenance from an inherited social and economic order which they ostentatiously denounce. Perhaps von Schonerer, the nationalist radical, was most like our own cultural gravediggers, and yet von Schonerer hardly typified the society which Schorske evokes, and he spent most of his life (deservedly) as a social outcast.

Despite the fatalistic outlook, however, Schorske's book is to be highly recommended to scholars and admirers of Viennese culture. If nothing else, it should make us aware of what the European bourgeoisie produced in its finest hour. Von Hofmannsthal, who was nostalgic for Baroque culture, compared his society to Augustan Rome and spoke of living in a "silver age." For those of us who are aware of the continuing erosion of Western spiritual vitality, his "silver age," in retrospect, seems increasingly appealing. □

On Evil, Devil & Despair

John Gardner: *Freddy's Book;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Earl Hilton

At the start, John Gardner's *Freddy's Book* seems to be another novel about a novelist writing a novel, another example of current literary narcissism. But it is more than that.

It opens in the present, in an encounter between Winesap, an outgoing, successful, perhaps overly optimistic scholar/lecturer; Agaard, a reclusive elderly scholar; and Freddy, Agaard's son, called a "monster" by his father because of his abnormal size, but a wise and gentle monster. Freddy presents Winesap with his manuscript, titled *King Gustav and the Devil.* The rest of the book consists of Freddy's story; Winesap, Agaard and Freddy do not reappear. Despite the claims made on the flap of the dust jacket, the two sections do not contribute significantly to each other. One wonders why Gardner bothered with the opening machinery. To present a "modern" surface to the many readers who find no meaning in the past? To tell a story of good and evil, featuring the Devil, without having his work classified as children's literature?

For the material of Freddy's story, Gardner draws upon Scandinavian history and folklore. In telling it, he achieves some of the effect of stylized simplicity we expect in the fairy tale. The setting is Sweden in the early 16th century, when Luther and the new thought of the Renaissance are causing men to question established views. A rebellion by the Swedish regent against the Danish king who rules all Scandinavia is put down and punished in "the bloodbath of Stockholm." In reaction, Gustav Vasa leads a successful rebellion and becomes king. Then Gustav must hold his power against all those who, whether from idealism or opportunism, try to seize it. Though his claim is more just than Macbeth's, he reminds us of Macbeth in the increasing ruthlessness with which he defends his throne; finally turning against even Lars-Goren, his most faithful adviser. Through the midst of this, in varying guises, moves the Devil, encouraging plot, counterplot and execution, enhancing his reputation as the father of confusion, and yet bored —perhaps nauseated is a better word— by mankind and himself. The cost of power is one theme of the book, and, to Gardner's credit, he never suggests political quietism as the solution. He stresses responsibility, and responsibility requires the exercise of power—prefer-

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ably, of course, without alliance with the Devil.

Yet Freddy errs in naming his book *King Gustav and the Devil.* The center of the book is the Devil's view of life and the varying degrees and forms of submission or opposition men offer to that view. And King Gustav offers little opposition. The characters who stand out are Lars-Goren, a nobleman of good heart and slow but accurate thought, and Bishop Brask, who shares the Devil's view but is pulled toward Lars-Goren. Another theme running through the book is the influence, for good or ill, that men exercise upon each other.

The Devil's view may seem modern to us, but it is probably less modern than we think. Browning presented what is recognizably the same sickness in *Sordello,* and it can no doubt be traced to still-earlier times. That sickness is despair: not the older, theological, sin of despair of salvation, often resulting in suicide, but a despair of finding meaning in life and death. Given a universe that has become "ungoded," as Gardner puts it in *On Moral Fiction;* given a knowledge of the intertwining of good and evil, and the way idealism often results in massacres; given the tendency of acceptance of all values under pluralism to result in rejection of all values; given our tendency to see all choice and action as the result of environment rather than will; given a vision of past, present and future suffering, and no immortality to balance it; given all these factors, life seems a cruel absurdity, and reflection upon it brings despair. Bishop Brask, a man of God who is certain that either God is dead, or He never existed, could write a book on despair. But not in his present condition. And whom would it serve, and what difference would it make whether or not it served anyone?

From despair comes an emotional deadness. Bishop Brask once thinks he might outwit the Devil "if he could summon up enough of his heart's warmth to make it worth it; but that was something he was in no mood to expect." When, under the influence of the Devil and Bishop Brask, Lars-Goren speculates that perhaps "the world makes no sense . . . good is evil and evil is good, or nothing is good or evil," he expects to feel horrified, but instead discovers that the more he thinks in that line "the more he felt nothing whatsoever."

From that "nothing," in turn, come two responses. Either one measures out one's life in coffee spoons, or one expends it in frenzied plotting for advancement. The Bishop combines the two: he wears himself out in plot and counterplot, but he cannot summon the energy to think or act his way out of the Devil's trap of lies. When he reveals his plan to support Gustav Vasa against the Danish king and then to betray Gustav when he has served the Bishop's purposes, he adds, "Such a stupid waste." When Lars-Goren asks, "Why do you do it then?" he reflects a moment and replies "Why not?"

Most power-seekers accept the Devil's suggestions without anxiety or even awareness. Bishop Brask accepts them but with some revulsion. Lars-Goren fears and opposes the Devil. He accepts the premise of "a world of spirit, vaguely, God." He accepts that premise "below reason," believing in truths beyond words and logic. Though he knows the ambiguity of truth, he astonishes the Bishop by finding enough of it to justify choice and action. When the Bishop points out the potential for falsehood in the new printing press, he even tentatively suggests, "Nevertheless, if the Devil were out of it, and people could quietly argue things out, apply the Golden Rule with an appropriate measure of self-love, if you follow me—"

Not that Lars-Goren is, or would expect to be, always right. At one point he finds himself enjoying out-plotting King Gustav's enemies, then looks behind himself nervously. Again, he orders the execution of a witch, and then regrets it. But Gardner presents witchcraft as more complex than it is seen in either the medieval or the modern view, as neither the work of the Devil nor a false belief which is the work of whatever may be the modern equivalent of the Devil. The witch has been, by her own confession—or boast—an authentic and effective witch. Yet when she returns from death to confront Lars-Goren, she blames her turn to the Devil on war, disease, repressive nobility and selfish peasants. But Bishop Brask points out that, given the freedom of immortality, she sought first, not her lost husband and children, but revenge. "You were a witch from the day you were born!" he exclaims. Lars-Goren says, "You are both right," and orders the witch to whichever realm will accept her. Environmentalism is not a substitute for moral responsibility.

Gardner prefaces *Freddy's Book* with a note acknowledging several borrowings from earlier sources. It seems a rather large confession with which to begin a novel. Probably Gardner, who teaches medieval literature, knows that it is virtually impossible to tell a story about the Devil without repeating *some* plot motif. Certainly the meaning he finds in the events is his own. His book suffers a little from didacticism. We hear a bit too much from Bishop Brask's thought and speech, and sometimes he seems to speak less from his own character and situation than from Gardner's need to make his views clear. □

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America Through the Funhouse Mirror

Howard Zinn: *A People's History of the United States;* Harper & Row; New York.

Lawrence Lader: *Power on the Left;* W. W. Norton & Co.; New York.

by Alan J. Levine

Howard Zinn and Lawrence Lader have written two books which attempt to recast American history into a form that will extract murmurs of delectation from the extreme American left. Zinn's book is a history of the United States which ignores most of the political, social and economic history of this country in favor of a worm's-eye view emphasizing the "left" and the "oppressed." Lader's tome treats the history of American radical movements since 1946. Neither writer displays much regard for truth or clarity of thought.

Zinn's view of American history, implicit also in Lader's work, reflects an obsession with domination, oppression and rebellion. The achievements of the American people hold little interest for him. Expansion across a thinly populated, unfamiliar continent and the creation of the most prosperous, highly organized democratic industrial society in the world are both meaningless to him, if not a source of shame. The only thing about the American people or any groups of Americans that excites Zinn is their real or alleged oppressiveness; practically any inequality in wealth or well-being, whatever its cause, constitutes oppression in his eyes. The result is a book that omits most of the major themes of American history in favor of massacres, riots, labor violence, slave revolts and wild exaggerations of the importance of "radical" movements and "conservative" conspiracies. At every point the evidence is squeezed to exaggerate inequities in American society and to show that merely legal and political efforts never bring reforms or relief for the oppressed. In Zinn's view, American society has always been controlled by a tiny, wealthy minority; the prevailing system has always been fundamentally corrupt and depraved. The well-being of the middle class is based on mere crumbs from the tables of the wealthy. While conservatives are by definition agents of darkness, liberals are either sinister or dupes; their prized reforms are schemes by the ruling class or reluctant concessions to threats or forces really represented by the further left.

To be fair, Zinn admits that he is only interested in showing things from the viewpoint of the "victims" of history. While he admits that his "victims" have sometimes been hard on one another, some of the real conflicts of American history are whitewashed, and in the process Zinn reaches new realms of incoherence. For example, relations between whites and Indians are treated in a strange manner. Zinn indulges in a fashionable sentimentalizing and erroneous homogenizing of the Indians' many different cultures. He emphasizes the superior "beautiful human relationships" fostered by their alleged avoidance of such horrors as early toilet training and male dominance, and by their common ownership of land. His attitude toward the European settlers is nihilistic and antiwhite, practically denying that they were more advanced than the Indians. To Zinn, civilization is a poor second-best to barbarism. Yet this view is uneasily combined with claims that the white upper class was responsible for all possible ills, and he professes to believe that even in colonial times there was a lost chance for poor whites, blacks and Amerinds to combine against their oppressors. Actually, it is well-known that it was the advancing fringe of farmers, ranchers and prospectors that was most hostile to the Indians. The Eastern upper classes, or parts of them, often favored more humane policies. (Similar conflicts of opinion developed on practically every settlement frontier in the world, from Siberia to New Zealand.) Zinn cannot even manage to be consistent in saying how many Indians there were; on different pages he supplies different figures for the pre-settlement population. Ironically, his loathing for modern civilization sometimes leads him to denigrate Indians. The Cherokees, one of the few peoples to successfully adopt European culture, are shown as doing this under dire threat from the outside; in fact, they did this quite freely.

Errors, bizarre assertions and exploded theories appear throughout. Tom Paine becomes a fuddy-duddy conservative. Charles Beard's discredited view of the Constitution as the product of a conservative conspiracy is disinterred. So is a famous misquotation of John Adams, in which Adams claimed that one-third of Americans supported the Revolution. (Actually, Adams was talking about

Dr. Levine is a frequent contributor to these pages.

"Professor Zinn's chapter on Vietnam—bringing to life once again the fire-free zones, secret bombings, massacres and cover-ups—should be required reading for a new generation of students now facing conscription . . . open-minded readers will profit from Professor Zinn's account, and historians may well view it as a step toward a coherent new version of American history."

—New York Times Book Review

"Zinn has written a brilliant and moving history of the American people . . . it will . . . make an excellent college text for basic history courses."

—Library Journal

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American support of the *French* revolution.) White women are treated, quite seriously, as slaves. Abraham Lincoln is abused for not freeing *all* the slaves with the Emancipation Proclamation; the legal and practical problems facing the president, such as the danger of alienating the Union slave states in the midst of the Civil War, are not even mentioned. Zinn attributes the defeat of the Confederacy to lack of "will power and morale" and claims that there was "much reluctance to fight" in the Confederate Army. This view of the Civil War would seem to bear as much relation to reality as nazi claims that Germany was ruined by defeatism in World War I. American industrialization is only briefly alluded to in crude "Robber Baron" stereotypes. The Spanish-American War and our intervention in World War I are treated as imperialist plots, partly intended to dampen allegedly explosive class conflicts at home.

An interesting wrinkle in Zinn's worldview appears in his treatment of World War II, a struggle usually regarded as a holy crusade by the left. Zinn spends nearly three pages in a verbose and inaccurate tirade trying to show that Americans were deluded in supposing that their country was peace-loving and morally superior to the Axis enemy. He tries to incorporate into leftist mythology some old *conservative* conspiracy theories about our entry into the war. As usual, however, he is inconsistent. First he complains that it was not Japan's invasion of China, but "the Japanese attack on a link in the American Pacific Empire" (his charming phrase for our 50th state) that brought America in; then he insinuates that Roosevelt's embargo was deliberately designed to provoke war—for sinister imperialist reasons, of course. The war is treated in a strangely sour fashion; even the nazis cannot galvanize Zinn into enthusiasm about his country. British and American bombing of Germany and Japan is deemed inconsistent with waging a "people's war" or a defensive war.

The atomic attacks on Japan are blandly labeled "atrocities"; following Cold War revisionists, Zinn removes the bombings from context and describes them as moves in the Cold War. He falsifies the facts as required to sustain this thesis. He erroneously claims that the Japanese government was willing to surrender before the bomb was dropped and that the Americans knew the Soviets would enter the war on August 8. Though Zinn mildly condemns the Soviet Union as well as Britain and America, his treatment of the Cold War largely consists of standard leftist myths. The Greek coalition government backed by Truman is mislabeled a "right-wing dictatorship." All communist insurrections are vaguely dubbed "revolutionary movements" independent of the U.S.S.R. and China—and all revolutionary movements are glorious, of course.

The contemporary American situation is described in near-hysterical terms. "Technology is running wild," Zinn grumbles. Computers reduce him to sputtering. "Auto accidents, the decay of the cities and the breakup of families were out of control."

While most readers, and particularly those who have suspended their critical sense, will probably have been reduced to a state of total demoralization and despondency by this point, yet Zinn still has hope—even hope for utopia. The follies of the "establishment," he thinks, will drive the whole population to rebellion, producing a society in which small groups of people will decide their own fates, creating a new culture: a "neighborly socialism" of cooperatives. From a hymn of hate, we have passed into a dream world. The need for government, division of labor and big organizations—and *controlling* those big organizations—is simply wished away.

Lader's *Power on the Left* is largely a theme-and-variations treatment of the last section of Zinn's work, though Lader is less prone to editorializing, and his Marxist influence is more pronounced. While Zinn rather dislikes violence, Lader is a trifle slippery, distinguishing between "destructive violence" (that of the right) and "constructive violence" (that of the left), though he does condemn "sheer terrorism" like that of the Red Brigades. Lader is also somewhat more procommunist, treating the Party's foibles sympathetically though not uncritically. There is nothing really wrong with communism; it's just "inapplicable" in the United States. He discourses on Stalin's "brutal realism" in concluding the Nazi-Soviet Pact, allegedly "to bring his army into combat readiness." Nikita Khrushchev was more truthful. Lader invariably extenuates Soviet foreign policy and its American apologists. Among other feats, he misquotes an article by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. as supporting his views. In fact, Schlesinger was one of the few liberal historians to sharply attack "revisionist" views of the Cold War.

Lader's definition of the "left" is remarkably flexible; it might well have inspired the admiration of Senator Joe McCarthy. Sometimes it seems to mean just the communists and their sympathizers, sometimes it is synonymous with the Far Left, but when convenient it seems to expand to include left-wing liberals and the civil-rights movement and, still further, to include the 57 varieties of cranks who have helped to make the last two decades so dismal. Interestingly, democratic socialists like Norman Thomas, who affected American life to a considerable degree by their influence on liberalism, are given short shrift.

Lader tries to portray the civil-rights movement as radical, playing up the importance and influence of the organizations on its left wing such as CORE and SNCC, i.e. those that became openly proviolence and antiwhite. Though Lader perceives that the guilt and self-contempt of white new leftists and their self-abasement before black nationalists proved counterproductive, he himself has a condescending attitude toward

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blacks. No expression of stupidity and bigotry by black nationalists inspires serious criticism.

One part of Lader's book that might be of some scholarly interest is his treatment of the new left. But even here he is not always trustworthy. The trial of the Chicago Seven is portrayed as a martyrdom of innocents, though some of the defendants later admitted they had aimed at provoking riots. Lader does provide a useful reminder of how unpleasant the new leftists were, especially to each other, for these people could hardly agree on the time of day, much less how to make a revolution. □

The Senior Executives' Drivel

Herb Schmertz and Larry Woods: *Takeover;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Clarence B. Carson

I had already read this novel before I happened upon the dedication while leafing through it. It came as a near shock for me to learn that:

> This book is dedicated to an endangered species . . . the free market system.

My near shock was occasioned by the disparity between the sentiments affirmed in the dedication and the story contained in the book.

It is true that dedications often appear to have little or nothing to do with the contents of the books they precede. Authors sometimes dedicate assorted tales of infidelities, bound as novels, to their wives. Presumably, there is no implication that their wives have been guilty of such infidelities. Nor would one suppose that the behavior being described is being recommended to the wives. Still, if one were to discover that Karl Marx had dedicated his *Critique of Political Economy* to the Rothschilds or that Fyodor Dostoyevsky had dedicated *The Brothers Karamazov* to Satan, he would be justified in supposing that some significance was attached to the dedication. Thus it is reasonable to conclude that if a novel is dedicated to an abstraction, such as the free market, the dedication must have something to do with the contents of the book.

It would be in order to expect, then, that this novel does something to praise or defend the free market. Potential readers are hereby forewarned not to buy the book with any great expectations that this is what it does.

It should perhaps be noted that businessmen in *Takeover* do utter some complaints about the disadvantages of various government regulations. First and last, there are a goodly number of such plaints. There is, too, the business of the executives of one of the companies buying a small airline company to forestall any takeover by another corporation. The point of this is that it takes so long to thread through the bureaucratic maze to get CAB approval to own an airline that potential raiders would be turned aside from the effort. There is also a caricature of a bureaucrat hell-bent on thwarting the takeover attempt.

These are no more pertinent to the story, however, than the "color" commentary on television is to a football game. They are incidents and asides to fill the dead air while the team huddles between plays. *Takeover* is concerned mainly with the doings of corporate executives. The plot of the novel might more aptly be called a conspiracy, a conspiracy by a senior executive of one corporation to take over another corporation with the aid of several underlings. What gives thrust to all of this is the sexual desires and predilections of corporate executives.

The senior executive who engineers the takeover is pressed into action by his mistress, a southern beauty who has gone through four husbands and is, while these events take place, married to a fifth; he is conveniently absent from the old plantation often enough not to interfere with the affair. It seems that she had a son by one of her lovers and wishes to make a provision for him by setting aside a fund large enough to enable him to live in high style for the rest of his life. She has a large block of stock in the target corporation, but it is only selling at about 10, and she needs to sell at 25. With that incentive the senior-executive hero goes into action, working his way through a moral and sexual morass which includes an impotent younger son, the sexually potent head of the corporation which is to make the acquisition, Mafia violence, homosexuality on Greek islands, misappropriation of company funds, theft—"a temporary loan"—from the U.S. Treasury, and so on. In the end, vice is triumphant, though in truth virtue is never on the field.

What has all this to do with the free market? I wish I knew. Then again, it may be just as well that I don't. My own impression is that the free market is about as remote from the activity in this tale as is virtue—another vanishing species, it would appear.

It is not my point, of course, that this or any other novel should have been written in praise or defense of the free market. I doubt that. An essay or monograph would be the right form for that. The novel is a complex and extended account of the engagement of an *individual,* or individuals, with life. In its heyday it was the preeminent literary expression of individualism. It is basically existential and individualistic. The novel was as foreign to the essentialist Middle Ages as paintings which dwelt too much on the features of individuals would have been. The possible decline

Dr. Carson's latest book is The World in the Grip of an Idea.

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of the novel as a viable form may be a necessary consequence of the prevalence of the collectivist ethos. More broadly, however, the novel cannot carry the weight of ideological rectitude. The successful novel depends not only upon literary skills but also upon a depth of insight into man and life and upon a rigorous honesty in depicting them. No man with great depth of insight can inwardly subscribe to the simplifications of an ideology, nor can he vindicate the propositions of an ideology without foregoing honesty.

Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* shows the pitfalls of using the novel as a device for praising or defending the free market. Undoubtedly she intended to do just that. Yet the work fails as a novel to the very extent that it succeeds in vindicating the free market. Her heroes are caricatures, not because they are larger than life but because they fall so far short of realizing the full potentialities of man. Her villains are caricatures of villains, not because they are more villainous than villains may be but because the villainy is simply a reflex of their (wrong) ideas. Her ideology prescribed that no one be dependent upon anyone else. Thus her utopia had to be sans infants and the aged senile. There could be no place in it for the lame, the halt and the blind; hence, they simply do not exist. Thus one hardens one's heart, narrows his vision, and becomes an intolerant advocate of the free market. Miss Rand made a pie without a crust: her free market was ideologized; her characters were caricatures; and her novel was drivel. The novel cannot bear the weight of ideology.

It is not that novels may not successfully deal with ideas, at least in certain ways. On the contrary, some of the greatest novels of the 19th century—the century of the novel—dealt with ideas. Dostoyevsky's work comes most readily to mind, but Turgenev's hardly less so. But their premier subject is individual persons, not ideas. It is men obsessed, possessed, gripped, warped and bent by ideology that is their subject matter. They caught the reductionist tendency of ideology long before it had become generally apparent and saw men shaken and undone by it. I can imagine, for example, a quite successful novel whose plot involves a person who believes with all his heart and soul in the free market. He goes into business time and again, only to fail more miserably each time he does. Such a novel would succeed, as a novel, to the extent that it traces the failure of the man to something within him.

Superficially, much of the above is irrelevant to *Takeover.* The novel is surely not about the free market as an idea. It may be about what the late Ludwig von Mises called the hampered market, but that is doubtful. In fact, it is hardly a novel of ideas at all. Its genre is the exposé novel, a variety of some duration. Its species is investigative journalism as fiction. It is a sort of peep show into the sordid world of corporate executives. It is peopled with stereotypes, whose views one knows before he hears them, and whose acts follow from what we know about them from a thumbnail sketch. The plot unfolds, but the characters remain what they were when first encountered. They neither grow nor deteriorate; they only change their stances to accommodate shifting perspectives. They are children who have achieved the height and adopted the appetites of men, but who play the childish games of dot-to-dot with corporate structures.

If Messrs. Schmertz and Woods have given us an accurate portrayal of the corporate executive, Wall Street variety, they would have done better to have documented it in a nonfiction book. The authors are described as officers and directors of one of the world's largest corporations. It might well be that they know whereof they speak. At any rate, they would be entitled to a respectful hearing.

There is no need, however, to debase the novel by presenting such moral pygmies as men. Man is capable of a considerable degree of development, growth, degeneration or expansion. He can be hero or villain, saint or sinner, greedy or generous, tough or gentle, productive or destructive and so on. A given man may be any and all of these at different times in the course of his life. It is in these many dimensions that the great and good novelists have depicted him. It is reasonable to suppose that a corporate executive is not just a corporate executive, plus being an occasional sexual athlete. For aught I know, some corporate executives write poetry, read the Bible, attend church and are even capable of public concern which extends beyond their private interests. It is unfortunate, I think, if they act as if they belong to a class. But if they do, that is surely the least interesting thing about them.

It is said, or believed, that when the barbarians invaded Britain, they allowed the cities to fall into decay because they did not know how to maintain them and had no use for them. It would be better for our current crop of writers to abandon the novel than to abuse what they do not understand. □

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Politics & Hatred

Tyrmand: Editor's Comment; Thompson on Hook and Rifkin *(Philosophy & Public Policy, The Emerging Order);* Fox on Buckley *(Saving the Queen, Stained Glass, Who's On First);* London on Talese *(Thy Neighbor's Wife);* Tanner on Atwood *(Life Before Man);* Schwartz on Hawkes and de Toledano *(The Passion Artist, Devil Take Him);* Pradl on Warhol and Hackett *(POPism);* Klute on French *(The Bleeding Heart);* Levine on FitzGerald *(America Revised);* Vasilash on Colter *(Night Studies);* Cage on Viorst *(Fire in the Streets);* Pilon on Krasnov *(Solzhenitsyn and Dostoevsky);* Scott on Kriegel *(On Men and Manhood);* Commendables; In Focus; Screen; Music; The American Proscenium; Journalism; Liberal Culture.

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How True . . .

Arnaud de Borchgrave and Robert Moss: *The Spike;* Crown Publishers; New York.

by Philip F. Lawler

Truth is stranger than fiction; that's why fiction is more realistic, even when it's used as a polemical tool. Argue all you want about the perils of parenthood; *King Lear* makes the point more forcefully. No one who has read Orwell, or Steinbeck, can remain innocent about totalitarian states, or migrant workers. And in the chiaroscuro world of international intrigue, where even the most basic facts are tinged with fantasy, flesh-and-blood characters—imaginary or not—lend immediacy to the argument. No scholarly essay on the topic could match the impact of *The Spike.*

Not that *The Spike* is on the same level as *1984,* or *The Grapes of Wrath;* far from it. The authors follow the standard formula for best-selling thrillers: there is plenty of sex, and readers can pick up enough arcane facts and phrases to flavor cocktail-party conversations. Moreover, in this case there is the voyeuristic appeal of the *roman à clef,* and the tantalizing question of where the truth ends and the fiction begins. Messrs. de Borchgrave and Moss (or whichever one constructed the plot) add an extra fillip by making historical references to the characters upon whom fictionalized characters are obviously based. Thus, in the novel, President Jimmy Carter is succeeded by President Billy Connor of Flats, Mississippi. But usually there is no such confusion about the character's identity, so the reader is treated to detailed speculation about how, say, William Colby (possibly recognizable in the character of Crawford according to the Washington grapevine telegraph), might respond to a given set of circumstances. This, too, is a proven technique of contemporary best sellers: Woodward and Bernstein have made it famous.

The "Woodstein" comparison is doubly relevant here, because the action of *The Spike* is a battle for control of the nation's media. Dozens of different personalities, acting on different motives, supply the leaks, the biased reporting and the phony investigations that contribute to a massive KGB disinformation campaign. Here, from a polemical point of view, the plot is more important than the dénouement. With a montage of detail, the authors illustrate how a hostile power can orchestrate all the petty jealousies and ambitions indigenous to the nation's capital, which can produce a tremendously powerful result from a conglomeration of small causes. True, there are calculating, dedicated, subversive agents, and there are ideological warriors committed to the same goals. But the greatest damage is done by those who are not *knowingly* involved: the "useful idiots" whom the KGB has learned to manipulate so skillfully.

Since the real-life "useful idiots" insist that the battle between CIA and KGB is not a matter of clear-cut good v. evil, de Borchgrave and Moss steal their thunder by depicting a world in which actors on both sides play fast and loose with the Golden Rule. Sins of the flesh abound; in fact much of the book's first 100 pages is taken up with the sexual exploits of the characters. And in the course of the action each side is able to "turn" an agent largely because his lusts have compromised his position. Nonetheless it becomes increasingly clear that the sins of the CIA are the sins of isolated men, while the sins of the KGB are endemic to their system. No one expects spies (or, for that matter, journalists) to exemplify Boy Scout virtue. The crucial distinction is that one side revels in weakness, and the KGB plans an entire international campaign, aimed at world domination, on that basis.

Sin makes good copy. *The Spike* is a legitimate thriller, ideal for a one-night reading. If the hero, Bob Hockney, is a bit too successful, and the coincidences too pat, those are the risks of using the novel as a means to treat a vast and complex subject. In the end, Hockney's credibility is established by his horrified, grudging realization that he has been used. He is not James Bond, superspy; he is a callow young man living among moral ambiguities, and he does considerable damage before realizing his mistake.

When Hockney does finally reverse himself and sets out to expose the conspiracy to which he has unwittingly contributed, he meets with "the spike"—his editors' decision to kill his story. Once again, the edge of the conspiracy is blunted. A few editors do nurture ideological biases, but by and large the editorial decision is prompted by an unspoken gentlemen's agreement that certain topics simply should not be discussed. Hockney's superiors do not want to seem overly nationalistic, let alone expose themselves to the inevitable accusations of McCarthyism. They are not malicious, but timid. So they bow to the *Weltanschauung;* the story dies, and the conspiracy continues toward its climax. Thus de Borchgrave and Moss dramatically illustrate the point that conservative critics have been making for years: today the *New York Times* is more inclined to berate the CIA than to expose the KGB.

The argument, then, is familiar. But the treatment is novel. We know how Bob Hockney thinks and feels; we share his frustration and outrage. And because we have been introduced to the other characters who populate the conspiracy, we realize the tangible implications of the crisis. So, we, the readers,

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come away from *The Spike* having felt the real anger and injustice that an abstract argument can never convey. Fiction brings immediacy. As Coleridge pointed out, imagination can yield logical conclusions much faster than painstaking reason can deduce them.

Although *The Spike* is now perched near the top of the best-seller lists, few of the country's major newspapers have carried reviews of the book. Perhaps this can be explained by the same reasoning that prompted King David to send Uriah out to the front lines; one does not like to confront reminders of one's own corruption. Thus *The Spike* is getting the spike; truth and fiction merge. The novel does reach a full and satisfying conclusion, yet the action continues outside the book. By implication we are all actors in the drama indicated by de Borchgrave and Moss. In the fictionalized version, the conspiracy is unveiled. But in real life? That question is still unanswered, and so the plot is unfinished. *The Spike* is Living Theatre. □

. . . but How Inept

May we take the liberty to respectfully disagree with our reviewer? We see his point. Like so many of us, Mr. Lawler longs for a conveyance of truth —which, for decades, has been so obvious to him and to ourselves—to the largest possible number of people. He believes that literature, fiction, theater, art can best do the job, that they are able to dramatize truth in a way that makes it generally accessible and embraceable. He is correct—but only on the nonnegotiable condition that it is literature, not "literature," art, not "art." Truths, whatever their rightness and depth, that are expressed in the Dick Tracy style live only as long as we have them in our field of vision. It is certainly unfair to compare *The Spike* to Dick Tracy, but Mr. Lawler, in order to substantiate his unequivocal apology of the former, invoked *King Lear,* Orwell and *The Grapes of Wrath,* which seems to us also slightly off the mark. However, he quite rightly notes that no major (liberal) newspaper has reviewed *The Spike.* No surprise—those who dislike the novel's message find it all too easy to dismiss it as miserable pulp, which absolves them from dealing honestly with what the authors legitimately wanted to establish as unshakable truth.

Let's not be misunderstood: we fully and wholeheartedly agree with what Messrs. de Borchgrave and Moss have to say. It's the *way* they say it that we bewail. We believe that a grand opportunity to make a momentous statement has been wasted. Here we have two highly respected journalists, experts on the contemporary political scene, who are able to make a fateful announcement that could influence historical events, and whose minds and hearts are in the rightest possible place. Yet to influence the thinking of people by means of *one* novel, one must impress, convince, or at least attract the attention of those who feed the minds of the masses on a daily basis. One must involve them in a dispute. For literature to do such a thing it must be either inspired by an extraordinary talent or armored with impeccable seriousness. There are novels in the history of literature that have done just that. *The Possessed* weakened the reigning faith in political radicalism. So did Conrad's *The Secret Agent.* Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* changed the English-speaking world's perception of Russia. Orwell and Silone did more to dissolve communism's sway over the post-World War II intelligentsia than tons of learned treatises and the most authentic research documents could have done. Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* is credited with doing more damage to the cohesion of the Communist Party cadres' spirit all over the world than any factual political catastrophe. Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* did more for the social renaissance of Catholicism than the Church would like to admit.

What sorely disturbs us is that rarely in the current history of the written word have we witnessed a more stunning symbiosis of correctness of moral premise and cognitive thesis, rooted in accurately dissected political reality, with such ineptness of literary form and technique. Messrs. de Borchgrave and Moss obviously desired to tell us that we are disarming ourselves morally and mentally, thus enabling our archenemies, the Soviets, to pervert our entire apparatus of state, society and culture by some abysmally convoluted manipulations of a vital contemporary social device—information. To convey *this* to us, they chose the novel as their vehicle. But a novel, to be effective, must notice the complexity of human reality, on the side of both right and wrong. Even cheap novels must somehow reflect this complexity, at least through melodrama that suggests some semblance of the human condition. Someone once said that every intelligent person can write one passable novel; this distinguishes him or her from a novelist, who can write many. Messrs. de Borchgrave and Moss are *two* intelligent persons, and we expected from them something more than from one average, intelligent person. True, they are journalists and, as such, their forte is noticing, not interpreting and analyzing, facts. But literature has thrived on intelligent journalism since the time of Defoe, if not before. By choosing the novel as their form, the authors took upon themselves an obligation that remains largely unfulfilled. We might not expect from them Graham Greene's mastery, Somerset Maugham's sophistication or even le Carré's dreary craftsmanship, but just exercising their own prodigious knowledge and intelligence would help. Controlling the literary taste a bit would be in order. And it would probably do the job. Why did they choose to release their work in this shape? Haste? A be-

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lief in sleaziness as a publicity advantage? An attempt to avoid head-on identifications, an assumption that a *roman à clef* could safely accuse and expose? We do not know the answers, but we tend to believe that it would have had a far more lasting effect, importance and impact if it had been published as a polemical or investigative tract.

To list some of their literary sins might be amusing if we—the good guys who are convinced that the authors are on our side—were not so victimized by their unbelievable pokiness. The reality of *The Spike* consists *only* of the CIA, the KGB, journalists, politicians and females straight from the pages of *Playboy.* Ideas, political concepts, social factors have no part in this game; only "strategic plans" exist. The world is run by gossip-column characters, "agencies" and "operatives." History is confined to the issues of daily newspapers. The dialogue is atrocious; it's as if it were not written with a pen but put together from clippings from tabloids.* Apparently the idea that language, and consequently conversations, may serve as much to conceal intentions, or to suggest desires, as to make outright statements, has never occurred to the authors (or their characters): even the subtlest relationships are handled by sock-it-right-between-the-eyes modes of communication. The protagonist, a certain Bob Hockney, "lanky and good-looking" and born into the so-called establishment, is a consummate idiot who, thanks to an astonishingly simplistic plot, becomes a little less of an idiot, but never a normally developed *homo sapiens.* It is doubtful whether he could survive one day in New York City, but the authors want him to succeed as the *New York Times's* (in disguise) ace reporter. They even give him a thought about himself: "He . . . was helping to change world history . . ." This, naturally, becomes a caricature, as Mr. Hockney, a perfect moron, never—throughout 379 pages of narrative—seems to realize *why* he so fiercely combats the CIA, or why, after his miraculous conversion, unmarred by any cerebral effort, he starts to defend the agency. According to the authors: "The deeper he dug, the more he came to feel that, as a journalist, he had a lot to atone for." This would be nice if only Messrs. de Borchgrave and Moss knew how to make us think that Mr. Hockney can "feel" any more than a Barbie doll does. At the end of the book the authors suddenly shift the narrative to a kind of futuristic political burlesque; it propounds the bold thesis that an American vice president is on the Soviet payroll—a KGB front man—if not financially, then ideologically. Not that we find this sort of cabaretlike conceptuality impossible, or far-fetched, but the style which is used to make us believe in such hyperbole strikes us as unnecessarily vulgar.

Quite offensive to our taste is the lame pursuit of so-called authenticity by the cheapest means possible. The detailed delineation of guns appears to be an obsession: the intentions of the "operatives" are recognizable by whether they use a Walther P-38, or an AK-47 or a Tokarev 7.62. This, unfortunately, does not make up for the authors' ignorance of how the enemy looks, proceeds, behaves when seen from the inside: in fact, Soviets in *The Spike* are straight from *Ninochka;* their manners of speech and their psychological reactions seem to be copied from Greta Garbo's "Russian" Hollywood comedy. We can imagine the belly laughs at No. 2 Dzherzhinsky Square when the novel is read by KGB experts. The narrative hits the peak of absurdity when a high KGB official in Geneva reprimands his subordinate, a potential security risk and possible defector, telling the future renegade agent that he will recommend his recall to Moscow "for disciplinary action." All the prestige that Messrs. de Borchgrave and Moss have accumulated for their Kremlinologist authority suddenly evaporates. They seem not to know that a totalitarian "operative" defects on presumption, on painfully deduced suspicions, that he never is exposed to verbal abuse. Simply rereading the opening chapters of *Darkness at Noon* could have helped them to avoid such a gross blunder.

Yet it is not the authors' inability to endow their characters with the capacity for deductive thinking which makes us sad. By far the most inexcusable offense is what they did to the OSS—not the venerable agency—the so-called obligatory sex scenes. We tried to figure out what the imitation of *Screw* magazine prose contributes to this novel, but to no avail. If Messrs. de Borchgrave and Moss had the touch and expertise of Roth or Updike, they could have claimed that they were searching for existential and human multidimensionality. However, their literary treatment of the matter makes us think that before each description of a sex act, they jotted down a list of terms—penis, nipple, erection, sperm, etc.—and proceeded systematically to use all of them within half a page in order to prove their *savoir-faire.* It might sound like this: "Did you already put in 'orgasm,' Arnaud?" "Yes, Robert, and I added two 'vaginas,' one 'scrotum,' and one 'damp triangle of hair.' " "Splendid, isn't it?" Their most refined female character, a person of good breeding, fine manners and the best credentials as the most positive woman in the entire novel, asks immediately after coitus: "How was it?"—with the ethereal gracefulness of a hamburger-stand manager.

* * *

This novel, written by a writer with talent, or at least artistic responsibility, could have made literary history. As it is, the book is just a bizarre phenomenon—the symbiosis of great moral and social truth with an embarrassingly imperfect literary representation of this truth. It makes us not disenchanted, or unsatisfied, but sad. (CC) □

*Example: " 'Freedom is a relative concept,' Renard said pensively. 'Michel, let's not f--- around philosophizing,' Hockney's tone was . . ."

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Commendables

Chappell on Printing

Warren Chappell: ***A Short History of the Printed Word;*** Nonpareil Books; Boston.

Warren Chappell's sense of the visual metaphor is well known to our readers. His vignettes grace these pages with an expressiveness that has distinguished Mr. Chappell as an American artist and illustrator *par excellence.*

This proves to be only one facet of Mr. Chappell's talents. Moreover, he is one of the most erudite and prolific historians of printing. For him, the printed word, like the illustration, is a precious medium of artistic communication; it is an abstract symbol, a conveyor of moods and ideas. And not many can illuminate the abstract and the profound with Chappell's resourcefulness.

Printing as a medium is, in part, the history of a succession of craftsmen, and their materials, which have had a significant impact on culture. Not long after Gutenberg printed his 42-line Bible, grammars and dictionaries were produced on such a scale that an amazing increase in literacy followed. The advent of newspapers and magazines provided a new training ground for writers (previously under the auspices of the church), raising new questions about the purpose and intent of those who used the printed word. And, of course, the power of the printed word brought forth the ever-nagging issue of freedom of the press. In 1690, Benjamin Harris printed America's first newspaper, a paper whose first issue was to be its last: it was declared to have been issued without authorization from the governor and council of Boston.

The progression of the structure and style of type, from the classic inscriptions of the Emperor Trajan to the first roman type of Sweynheim and Pannartz, spanned thirteen centuries and was as deeply influenced by history's great leaders as it was by the great artisans. The directives of Charlemagne and Cardinal Richelieu were perhaps no less important than the gifted hands of the type designers Nicolas Jenson, Christophe Plantin, William Caslon and Claude Garamond.

This book was first published in 1970 by Alfred A. Knopf. The edition reviewed here has lost none of its original impact as a complete work. It remains a treasure. (RAV) □

Visual Gourmandise

William Packer: ***The Art of Vogue Covers 1909-1940;*** Harmony Books; New York.

John Fowles and Frank Horvat: ***The Tree;*** Little, Brown & Co.; Boston and Toronto.

D. Duane Cummins: ***William Robinson Leigh: Western Artist;*** University of Oklahoma Press; Norman, Oklahoma.

That old conservative cliché, every day in every way things are getting a little bit worse, is certainly reinforced by this book. Just contrast the *Vogue* covers presented here with the ones of the last decade. Within recent memory, every *Vogue* cover has been uniformly monotonous: the same—or imperceptibly different—blue-eyed blonde, never older than 22, stares coolly out at us, underemotional and overmade-up, always in three-quarter view. Avid readers never know if they are looking at the new issue until they study the date.

But the *Vogue* covers of the past—what a difference! Each one was drawn—not photographed—by one of the masters of the genre, and each was highly individualized and stylized, reflecting the prevalent fashions and graphic tastes of its epoch. Several of the artists were geniuses: Lepape, Benito, Eric. (Another genius, Erté, still going strong today at 90, was employed by *Harper's Bazaar.*) Others were merely very talented: Dryden, Meserole, Plank, Steinmetz. The exuberance, colorfulness and inventiveness of these covers make one yearn for the time when fashion and style and elegance were interconnected concepts which made a certain segment of life a little brighter, a little more delightful. Our era is sadly lacking these qualities. (MEF)

* * *

This is a volume of photographic essays by a famous photographer, Frank Horvat (born in Italy with a Hungarian name, he has had a lifelong career in fashion photography in England and France), combined with essayistic vignettes by the noted English novelist, John Fowles *(The French Lieutenant's Woman).* They set out to roam the countryside of continental Europe and part of the United States, and apparently they stopped before each tree possessed of so-called character to take a picture and to wistfully muse about its aesthetics and destiny. The bracing beauty of the tree, one of the least-noticed companions of man on earth, comes hauntingly across in these images. What we realized, paging through this book, was how closely the tree accompanies man through his existence, and how faithfully it keeps him company over his grave when he's gone.

* * *

Here is an assiduous evocation of W. R. Leigh's western romanticism and aestheticism, which was so routine in turn-of-the-century American art. Unfortunately, even then it was obsolete by the European standards that finally prevailed in the visual consciousness of our time. Leigh, once billed as "the last great painter of the old west," ages as well as prairie furniture. His work retains a robust decorative flavor; his philosophical and social musings—strewn throughout the volume—are mildly vexing, if not downright silly. □

In Focus

Rooseveltiana

Robert Dallek: ***Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy 1932-1945;*** Oxford University Press; New York.

Robert Dallek has supplied a complete and highly detailed, though rather uncritical, account of Roosevelt's prepresidential views, his programs in the 1930's and his foreign policy.

Roosevelt's "dissembling" before Pearl Harbor is one of the few actions Dallek finds worthy of criticism. Though Dallek thinks that Roosevelt acted with just cause, he feels that this was a "precedent" for arbitrary ac-

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tions and "manipulations of public opinion" by later presidents—presumably a reference to the fashionable picture of the Vietnam War. However, it is by no means clear that Roosevelt's alleged deviousness was significant; while he did obfuscate the fact that the United States was moving toward war with Germany, he did not conceal his policies, and each individual step was certainly supported by public opinion. In his public statements about the "Greer incident," Roosevelt did clearly misrepresent the facts. His misstatements were quickly exposed by the isolationists, but he did not lose any support because of this.

Dallek rightly emphasizes that Roosevelt was not as blind or irresponsible in his policy toward the Soviets as has often been claimed. Yet he also claims that Roosevelt accepted "that Eastern Europe was a Soviet sphere of control" which, in fact, he did not do. Thus, Dallek's defense of the administration's propaganda whitewash of Stalin's regime is rather feeble, particularly since he frankly admits that then-contemporary public-opinion surveys showed that this was not really needed to secure the public's acceptance of lend-lease aid to the Soviets. Nor can Dallek justify similar foolish propaganda about China, which Roosevelt actually described in 1943 as "one of the great democracies of the world." Roosevelt's policies toward China are only relatively more defensible than those toward the U.S.S.R., for virtually all the advice he received was defective in one way or another. It is hard to justify either his initial policy of all-out, uncritical support for Chiang Kai-shek (against the advice of both military and civilian experts) or the later attempt to push the nationalists into a fundamentally unworkable coalition with the communists.

Still, as Dallek shows, Roosevelt led the United States through twelve exceptionally difficult years, and he was brilliantly successful in surmounting the most immediate dangers our country faced. That is a lot more than can be said for any of his successors. (AJL) □

Perceptibles

John Irving: ***3 by Irving (Setting Free the Bears; The Water-Method Man; The 158-Pound Marriage);*** Random House; New York.

John Irving wrote these three novels before he wrote *The World According to Garp.* He is certainly a novelist whose earlier works are worthy of investigation. His prose is precise, and it has an idiosyncratic rhythm and flow which make it attractive and involving. It is just this kind of literary texture into which momentous observations, judgments and sagacities can be factored. Whether Irving is using his gifts to create form and fill it with adequate content is, on the evidence of these samples, debatable. His exquisite way with words makes him a wizard at concealing the banality of what he has to say. Anyway, we can, with a clear conscience, attest that *The 158-Pound Marriage,* another probe into the marital limbo of our age, is quite intriguing, although it settles for vaguely poetic moods rather than using any well-digested reasoning. We're afraid that Mr. Irving's concept of the human condition, instead of being structured by moral insights and social history, may be influenced more by pop sociology, with its cliché visions of sexual athletics—and that's always a danger.

* * *

Max Crawford: ***The Bad Communist;*** Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; New York.

This is a novel of terrorist and radical-chic politics during the early 70's in San Francisco's Bay Area. The story is populated by "Maoist thugs," liberal lawyers, "forty-year-old flower children," homosexuals, bisexuals, "psychodrama gurus," pacifists, dope dealers, frat-brothers-turned-terrorists, sneaks, pathological liars and Stanford professors. There is not a likable character in the whole book. Though pseudonyms are usually used, someone who was caught up in those turbulent times may recognize many of the people, places and incidents. The plot revolves around events that actually occurred: the rescue of a California prison inmate and the murder of a guard, a radical Stanford professor who is fired, and a split in the ranks of the Bay Area's Maoist "collectives."

The effects of left-wing moonshine have trapped the author in an ideological dilemma. He is fond of Marxism but detests Marxists, or at least those varieties spawned by the upheavals of the 60's and early 70's. Resolving such a problem is not a very palatable task for a novelist. (JTF)

* * *

Anatole Broyard: ***Men, Women and Other Anticlimaxes;*** Methuen; New York.

> New York City people, as F. Scott Fitzgerald might have said, are different from Connecticut people. They have more problems. Compared to life in Connecticut, every moment in New York City is an emergency.

In this opening paragraph of the first article, Anatole Broyard introduces the prevailing theme of this volume. Mr. Broyard is a literary critic for the *New York Times,* but most of the fifty brief articles in this collection were published in other sections of the *Times* between 1977 and 1979.

As a refugee from Manhattan, he now lives in a typical residential community in southern Connecticut. He has not forgotten the petty irritations and deteriorating aspects of city life, but he has been a resident of exurbia long enough to have discarded any illusions about "country life":

> We say that we live in the country, but exurbia is not country. It is, in my case at least, a grandiose housing project with almost none of the pastoral values or forms that the word country used to suggest . . . We merely reside here, in a benign exile from the city, in a landscape that strikes us as so undifferentiated that we feel impelled to punctuate it with pools and tennis courts.

His present house is two hundred years old, and Broyard muses on various facets of owning such a place:

> People in New York City have psychotherapists, and people in the suburbs have handymen. While anxiety in the city is existential, in the country it is structural. A therapist holds your life together, and a handyman holds together your house. To move to the country is to transfer paranoia from people to things. And things are even less permanent, less reliable, than people.

So, what's new? Only that Mr. Broyard isn't really a New Yorker but a Creole who has never forgotten his roots. (WAH) □

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Reay Tannahill: *Sex in History;* Stein & Day; New York.

A prodigious research and compilation effort apparently went into producing this volume, but the result is—all told—boring. Somehow, this seems incompatible with the subject itself, but lately so much tedium has been thrust into things sexual that it would be rather unfair to hold it against the author or to blame her for failing to use some originality of approach; this is where so many before her have proved themselves deficient. Ms. Tannahill brings to the panorama of carnal activities throughout the ages a banal feminist slant which hardly enlivens her narration. She is listed on the dust jacket as a highly successful historian of food and eating habits, which may have somewhat handicapped her venture into a realm where sensuality is subject to impulses more complex than snacks and digestion. "Strip human history down to essentials, and it becomes clear that there are only two—food and sex . . ." maintains the blurb. We don't believe that. To our mind, the ideas about both, how to get them and what to do with them, among other factors, make human history—and distinguish us from simians. But Ms. Tannahill seems unable to conceive of this subtle difference, and that's what makes her book so meager, its size notwithstanding. □

Editor's Comment *continued from page 5*

implementations of Rousseau's ideas. To a conservative, each of these violates some norm of existence; mankind's most reliable regulator of values which were perfected through millennia of civilization. The conservative principle is antireductionist: man should never be simplified, lest we impoverish his humanness. Conversely, the conservative's adversaries in today's America seek happiness in simplification, and at the same time accuse the conservative of simplism.

6.

The Democratic Party, which embodies the liberal, anticonservative attitudes in the sociopolitical arena, consistently assures Americans in the lower walks of life that it is on their side. It's not a hollow declaration when particularities of a social condition—like work, wages, communal arrangements and special group interests—are in focus. But man's social condition is only one part of his existence; larger stakes are inherent in what must be termed the human condition. And here, the conservative is on the people's side. Human dignity, to a conservative, means a permanent value, one whose societal guarantees transcend concern for one union settlement, or one economic compromise, or one political solution. Social conscience, which a liberal often confuses with pity, is a deeply indwelling ingredient of the conservative principle: to a conservative, it means a sense of responsibility for man and society. This is why a conservative is so appalled by the tag of social conscience which is today so insouciantly pinned to the lapels of those who so nonchalantly ruin other people's lives by dispensing fraudulent, ready-to-wear concoctions for how to live. The conservative thinks twice, or thrice, before telling people how they must be. He has social conscience.

In spite of his cliché image, so flippantly distributed by the official liberal culture, he and none other today represents reason, moderation, courtesy, pluralism, toleration, broadmindedness, attention to the needs of the needy—in other words, progress, enlightenment and antidogmatism. To many, this may sound like an insolent paradox. But to prove such a theorem, all one need do is to look into national magazines, watch Hollywood movies, read literary journals—all pillars of the morals and manners which have been constructed by those who swear to their anticonservative principle. What one sees will be a panorama of anticonservative thought, conduct, mores which correlate with toleration, reason, courtesy and broadmindedness as well as freedom of the press correlates with the press's truthfulness.

7.

The slogan "justice for the oppressed and exploited!" has proved to be history's most successful proposition. Its seductiveness always was, and still is, rooted in the power of the idealistic melodrama, the poetry of altruism. Our capacity to be mobilized by this motto remains mankind's supreme blessing.

Yet justice for the oppressed and exploited has never become a reality. Only in America, of all places, has it even been approximated, perhaps because it was never too assiduously sought here, not too overtly preached—at least not until rather recently, the last century or so. This is exactly when it began to lose its real significance, for, too rigidly enforced—as has been proved in other countries—the redress and improvement of justice for a few oppressed and exploited almost immediately results in the oppression and exploitation of others.

So it looks like the prosperity of the catchword has little to do with its implementation. However, if we measure the slogan's success—not by realizing its semantic content, but by another standard—the phrase has been wildly successful. Its moving force has resulted in more crimes, follies, sorrows, hardships, vices and chaos than have been caused by any deliberately vile design registered by history. This noble impulse to alleviate misery has proved itself to be a surefire generator of public suffering.

The conservative principle is firmly welded to the suspicion that changing social arrangements may be quite perversely related to the improvement, or even alteration, of the human condition. What is certain, and has so often been confirmed by recorded events (Oh, Mr. de Tocqueville!) is

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that violent change brings woe and waste and elicits dark wickedness from men. Who said that the only revolutions are the moral ones?

8.

Yet America is founded on change; its entrepreneurial creed and existential ethos equates change with optimism, idealism, hope. To a thoughtful conservative, change is not a murky threat; he believes that a mechanism of moral controls can cope with its perils and function for the common good. Freedom, one of his sacred words, implies room for change. Economic freedom means that the doors of the market, of enterprise, of capitalistic activism are wide open to change. These devices have proved to be paramount in providing societies with well-being and affluence, and the businessman should be given the opportunity to change the world for the better.

However, the conservative principle is wary of the newest wave of anticonservative laissez-faireism. A responsible conservative is hardly indifferent to what the businessman is doing and how he is doing it. He is fully aware that what the businessman does and how he does it have more than economic consequences. And a conservative understands that it is in the businessman's best interest to be aware of other dimensions of his presence and deeds. Which makes the conservative principle a practical catechism, quite useful to everybody.

9.

Even if it sounds intractable, the idea of progress nowadays seems to belong to the American conservative. He is the only one around who wants to change things without drowning them in fantasies. Since the 18th century, the idea of progress has been the preserve of utopians, theorists, abstractionists, and both the idea and mankind have suffered. The conservative mind accepts the idea of change as inseparable from improvement: the adjective "better" is the key word to conservative progressivism. As an ideological proposition it is *not* an oxymoron.

However, the conservative predicament in America lies in the dearth of valid visionaries. The justness and depth of emerging ideologies is not the business of politicians or journalists—those who, in our time, rule America's collective imagination. Philosophers must devise the correctness and profundity of ideologies, whose social acceptability and eventual victory are only then made possible through the intervention of sentimental fabulists and literary dandies. And these days, the philosophers and publicists are all sitting on the other side of the fence, offering their services to American wealth, which, at this juncture of history, is not progressive but *gauchiste.* What once was considered respectable old money, or the establishment, is no longer interested in reason and civility. It's looking for both thrills and profits from promoting cinematic bestiality as social message and deliverance, and a lesbian Navy as national defense.

10.

Lowliness was once associated with filth: it was the destitute who lacked the luxury of hygiene. This axiom has been strangely reversed in our era: the rich and moneyed seem to enjoy and indulge in grubbiness as if it were a newfound badge of honor and distinction. "When I see an antinuke demonstration," an elderly lady confided in me, "I ask myself timidly whether these rich kids from Westchester County mansions were ever toilet-trained." She had touched a sore point. Those people who nowadays protest nuclear

Social Register

We are pleased to announce that Mr. Jerry Rubin—former chairman of the board of the Hippie-Yippie-Countercultural Complex (subsidiaries: Chicago Seven Association, Anticorporate Crusade, Death to U.S. Imperialism Fund), has taken a position with the Wall Street investment and securities firm of John Muir & Co. Approximate salary: ca $40,000 per annum.

* *

We are proud to inform our readers that the average *Mother Jones* reader had—at the beginning of 1979—a $23,000-per-year income, according to the publication's own estimate. In case our readers do not know what *Mother Jones* publishes, preaches and propagandizes, it should be noted that *MJ* represents a virulent, new left, anticapitalistic, pro-Castro & Assoc. ideology and message. *Mother Jones* is closely related to the Institute for Policy Studies (according to *Barron's Weekly)*, which, in turn, is widely believed to be a model for the fictional "Institute for Progressive Reform" in the recent best seller, *The Spike,* which (according to *The Spike)* is a front organization for Soviet KGB activities in the United States. The affluent subscriber and reader of *Mother Jones* would be enchanted to know, we presume, that his money is being used to bolster the subversion of his own affluence by an intelligence agency—all moral considerations aside. Incidentally, the average yearly income of a pro-Reagan voter in November 1980 is projected as less than $20,000 by some pollsters. □

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Liberal Culture

Siskel

Siskel is a name. It belongs to a movie reviewer whom the *Chicago Tribune,* his employer, prefers to call a "film critic." We entitled what follows with his name not because Mr. Siskel merits a story, but because he seems to us a paradigm of those forces that daily inflict an almost-irreparable injury upon the popular culture. Mr. Siskel is a run-of-the-mill reviewer, shallow and trite, who has never said anything interesting, let alone original, about movies—at least, to our knowledge. He reacts to plots and messages with the routine liberal predictability. He faithfully obeys the socio-ideological precepts set decades ago by the *New York Times* editorials, *New York Review of Books* aesthetics and the born-again modish progressivism of his own organ. Politically he seems to be an admirer of Jane Fonda and *The China Syndrome.* He supports the star system and helps stars of the Redford type who are deep into so-called social advocacy. He reaches a large number of people in Chicagoland with his radio and television performances. We have yet to spot in his work a single innovative or controversial interpretation of a movie—to our mind, a precondition of art criticism, one which has been discarded by the school of socialist realism, of course.

Still, boring professional mediocrity does not warrant an accusation of harmfulness. The detrimental nature of the Siskels in this land came to the fore, however, and in a rather perverse way, when Mr. Siskel, in one of his reviews, took a stand which we found highly commendable and would be happy to applaud loudly. He went with the utmost ferocity after a movie, *I Spit on Your Grave,* which, according to his analysis, is the most scurrilous, exploitative piece of manure ever to emerge from the corrupt film industry. Thanks to the perverted morality of United Artists, its distributor, the film received an R rating, and now children of all ages, accompanied by imbecilic but permissive parents, can witness multiple "rapes in shocking detail," "a hanging, a hatcheting, and a couple of castrations." The promotional ad for the movie reads: "This woman has just cut, chopped, broken, and burned five men beyond recognition . . ." and Mr. Siskel is justly incensed by what he calls a "revenge flick" that is ". . . easily the most offensive film I have seen in my 11 years on the movie beat."

But at whom does he direct his righteous and correct outrage? Does he point out the heinousness of the producers who thrive in the fetid climate of the Liberal Culture and bask in the recognition of the semi-literate TV talk-show pundits who would eagerly tag this movie "high camp" and fight for its right to be publicly shown in keeping with the First Amendment's premise? Does he take on United Artists, whose laissez-faire economic ethics will do anything—even if it contaminates America with moral pus—for a buck (and an R-rated movie means many more bucks than an X-rated one)? No, Mr. Siskel goes to a Chicago theater, spots couples with young (4-8 years old) children in the audience, interviews the parents, gets blockheaded answers from people classically benumbed by the libcultural mood of our current reality, and laments: "I was watching a typical American family being entertained in the year 1980 . . . today's mainstream moviegoing public has become desensitized to violence and has turned into a thrill-seeking crowd."

Correct. But does Mr. Siskel —or his countless colleagues from coast to coast—connote with himself what the public has become? With his work? His guilt? His part in the problem? It does not look as if he does. He's quick to quote the theater owner who blames the Chicago Police Department for giving a general audience permit to *I Spit.* But the police, like all supervising offices nowadays, work in a vicious atmosphere; tracking down obscenity in entertainment often results in being abused and vilified by the defenders of freedom of expression *a tout prix*—in other words, by the hordes of Siskels who, a few years ago, would crucify anyone who dared to warn that Andy Warhol's filth, *Hustler's* barbarity and Bertolucci's elegant nihilism would result, in time, in simple people looking for "thrills" other than John Wayne's westerns. Mr. Siskel makes no connection between

Editor's Comment *continued from page 42*

power are venting their anticonservative impulse in a bizarre way. As we all know, it all started in the 60's with theories and rhetoric which condemned any concern for cleanliness as an immoral camouflage of spiritual rot. Neglect came to symbolize progress; slovenliness acquired the status of moral superiority.

In fact, the very first step on the ladder from poverty up to a better livelihood is symbolized by a passion for tidiness; neatness becomes ambition. One has only to visit the homes of those who have graduated from the slums to a slightly better neighborhood, to look at their children, their Sunday ceremonies. A well-scrubbed aura of tangible order becomes a passion, the metaphor for a better life.

Which is the triumph of the conservative principle.

11.

A radical ideologue once described a serene village in England: "They all seem to be very happy that time has stopped here. They resist any idea of change. It's repulsive!" I could not understand his outrage. If people are happy, why should they seek change? Is stability and permanence the Devil's invention? I, for one, do not know how to separate the idea of progress from the idea of stability and permanent values. The destruction of values, in whatever name it is done, is never progress. Those who do not comprehend that blindly hate the conservative principle without having ever understood it.*

—*Leopold Tyrmand*

*This is a portion of a chapter entitled "The Conservative Principle" from *The Prudent Progressive or an Arcadia of New Wisdom.*

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his activity as a "critic" and the inhumanity that is spreading around us via pop culture. Like President Carter, he blames the American people for what has happened to them under his guidance of their cinematic tastes. He chooses not to remember what he himself wrote about his reviewing:

> This column has routinely supported the new permissiveness in movies . . .

He, of course, is not guilty. He casts the stones.

Patience and Sacrifice

Rolling Stone is the house organ of the multibillion-dollar, archcapitalistic, outrageously exploitative and manipulative record industry. It also performs as perhaps the most successful outlet for Guccione's Caligula-lifestyle-for-all philosophy. It also pays the highest commissions in the magazine business for inspired pieces of communist propaganda. In *RS's* May 1980 issue, the visiting cultural commissar is Mr. Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a gifted Colombian novelist and Castroite agitprop operative. This time, he sets out to give the "truth" about postwar Vietnam to *Rolling Stone's* readers. The boat people, according to Mr. Marquez, were capitalist hyenas, bloated "by March 1978 [with] almost all the gold and foreign exchange in the country . . ." The communist government handled this problem, like everything else, with "limitless patience and sacrifice." The American press misinformed the world about everything—not a totally incorrect accusation, but rather false in this case. The real gem comes when Mr. Marquez informs us about the proceedings of the communists in the realm of national economy:

> In early 1978, the army and police dismantled the enormous speculative apparatus, and the state took over commerce in food. No judicial action was taken against the profiteers; instead, the government paid them for their merchandise.

Mr. Marquez might be considered right about this, although his correctness is of a bloody and perverse nature. According to all the news that reached any unbiased journal in the entire noncommunist world, there was, indeed, no judicial action against the Vietnamese merchants. Their goods were confiscated, and they were shot on the spot. Others went to reeducation camps where they either starved to death or were finished off by forcible exposure and thirst. Still others desperately took to the China Sea in tiny vessels, choosing unspeakable danger, suffering and the possibility of a cruel death—anything to escape the communist payment for their merchandise. They are thus engraved on the world's conscience as the boat people. Mr. Marquez can decide which of these three patterns of human destiny he feels best fits as an illustration of the limitless patience and sacrifices of the Vietnamese communist torturers.

Thought Control—

And now—the newest and most *in* notion of education as proselytized by Pink Floyd, a rock group very much in favor with teen-agers and the liberal media:

> We don't need no education.
> We don't need no thought control.
> No dark sarcasms in the classroom.
> Teacher, leave those kids alone.

Mind control? Wouldn't such an atrocity justify a full-scale revolution against the yoke of algebra and its henchmen, the American Gestapo, instituted by the corporate power structure just to oppress kids?

Activism

A retrospective on student activists of the 70's was offered in a recent issue of *Time* magazine. The article detailed the metamorphosis of a certain "Chip" Marshall, former SDS leader, a defendant in the "Seattle Eight" conspiracy trial, into an average American businessman. Commenting on the transformation is an erstwhile fellow activist:

> 'Basically, I think we were on the right side of history,' he says of his and Marshall's support of Hanoi during the Viet Nam War.

Marshall doesn't seem to agree:

> 'Sometimes I feel really terrible. Maybe we were completely wrong on Viet Nam.'

But here's another view of the 70's activism, provided by an 18-year-old University of Washington student:

> 'I feel kind of jealous I wasn't there. The campus activities had the air of a carnival.'

That's true. It was a binge of blind frenzy unparalleled in history—a revelry for which we are still paying. A festivity which may still exact from all of us some unforeseen dues. (BK) □

Journalism

Gannett's Moderation

In the mid-American, patriotic, moderate, nonpartisan, First Amendment defender Gannett newspaper chain, a certain Mr. Gary Deeb, a self-styled TV "critic," heaps abuse on CBS because—after years of portraying CIA agents as the murderers of every little schoolgirl in Chile and Zimbabwe—the network decided to show the agency's side of the story.

We think that Mr. Deeb is wasting his time with Gannett. We're pretty sure that *Pravda* and *Izvestya* would be delighted to reward him much more generously for what he has to say about the CIA assassins and about CBS's "licking their boots"; he matches the Soviet agitprop style to perfection. However, they would not want him to relocate under any circumstances. Having a soul brother like Mr. Deeb in Chicago is their best guarantee that the KGB will have no trouble in New York, Peoria or anywhere else between the shining seas. □

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Intellectual Fairness

The Atlantic Monthly is a liberal journal of opinion with a simple method of dealing with opinion as a factor of democratic reality. According to this method, only liberal opinions are valid, worthy of publication in the form of an article, essay or treatise. Any other opinion must make do with an abbreviated letter to the editor (if it is accepted for printing, which is not always the case, since the editor is protected by the First Amendment and is fully entitled to voice his disagreement with another's disagreement by throwing the letter into the wastebasket).

This brings us to *Atlantic's* opinion of Pope John Paul II. It was written by a "journalist living in London," which immediately raises the question why a journalist would elaborate on a subject as complex as the papacy in a journal that only pretends to a premier intellectual standing. The riddle is easily solved: he is a liberal journalist and, as such, he imparts his sophisticated opinion that a pope is "good" only if he admits to liberal postulates for faith in general and for the Catholic church in particular.

Unfortunately, John Paul II is not a "good" pope: "He has banned one of Western Europe's most prominent liberal theologians, Hans Küng . . ." His Catholicism is "doctrinaire . . . suited to the garrison church of his native Poland," and the Polish church is untouched "by the fresh breezes of reform" and "clings fervently to tradition in both theology and pastoral practices." However, "there is still room for optimism about [the] man . . ." if only John Paul II will support the achievements of the Dutch Catholic church (optional celibacy of priests, approval of homosexual marriages, etc.) and ordination of women, he will turn into a "good" pope. As "liberal" is a priori good, only a liberal "solution" promotes optimism, and other points of view need not apply for consideration. The possibility that John Paul II may have some subtle, profound and very learned objections to all those liberal goodies does not cross the mind of the "journalist from London," who, of course, applauds the Dutch church.

What's even more depressing than *Atlantic's* so-called intellectual fairness is the fact that the *Chicago Tribune,* an allegedly nonideological organ serving a large audience of Polish-Italian-Irish-American Catholics, rushed to reprint *Atlantic's* elucubrations. As if there were a dearth of Catholic theologians at Chicago universities who could comment on the subject. As if the *New Oxford Review,* one of the most scholarly journals of Christian opinion in America, were unable to provide enough commentary to be reprinted in the *Chicago Tribune,* thus reaching a larger readership. However, the Chicago professors and *New Oxford Review* scholars might support John Paul II and his quest to revitalize and refurbish Catholic thought, philosophy and theology, to restore Catholicism's ancient glory in keeping with its endemic spirit. The *Trib* runs no risk of such a transgression with *The Atlantic Monthly* and its "experts" on what is good, noble, proper and—of course—Catholic.

There's only a small step from the *Chicago Tribune's* unfairness to the indecency of a Sunday supplement, *Parade,* which is distributed by the Gannett chain. It thrives on answering questions as to who sleeps with whom, where, why and how, among the so-called celebrities. This fount of wisdom recently ran a minicolumn entitled "Assessing the Pope." The assessors were *Parade's* most trusted "theologians"—one a "former Jesuit, now married," whose work *Parade* terms "brilliant." Their verdict:

> [John Paul II is] not particularly *interested* in modern ideas and problems—such as women priests, marriage for priests, and birth control . . . an impatient, energetic conservative determined to reinforce traditional dogma and hoping somehow to stay the tide of Soviet Marxism by *infecting* it with the virtues and values of the Catholic Church. (Emphasis added)

Infecting with virtues? What a sinister scheme . . . □

Responsible, Reliable, Unbiased, Trustworthy, Honest

The above are adjectives with which the American journalist eloquently endows the towers of press power in this republic. The Associated Press, for example.

Here is how the AP implements those characteristics in a widely reprinted story on Ronald Reagan's plans for the CIA and the FBI if he is elected:

> The proposed FBI charter removes restrictions imposed after a Senate committee turned up abuses of civil liberties by the CIA and FBI. 'The worst abuse by these agencies has not been in civil liberties but in incompetence and bad intelligence,' said a Senate staff aide, who helped draft the charter but *asked not to be named* . . . . But a top CIA official, *who asked anonymity,* said, 'This gives us powers we've never asked for and don't want.' And a Justice Department official *who also did not want to be named,* said, 'This would weaken the intelligence community by casting its practices into further legal doubt.'

The emphasis added is ours. We maintain openly that the AP is exercising its professional power in a most unsavory way: irresponsibly, unreliably, with bias, untrustworthily and dishonestly. They are supporting and disseminating allegations by people who are too cowardly to use their own names, and who, therefore, may or may not even exist. Our names are on the masthead. □

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Percussive Expressionism, *Little Women* Update & the Triumph of Idiocy

The Tin Drum; Written by Volker Schlöndorff, Jean-Claude Carriére and Franz Seitz; Directed by Volker Schlöndorff; from the novel by Günter Grass; a New World Pictures release.

Foxes; Written by Gerald Ayres; Directed by Adrian Lyne; United Artists.

Being There; Based on the novel by Jerry Kosinski; A Hal Ashby Film; United Artists.

Coal Miner's Daughter; Based on the autobiography by Loretta Lynn; Directed by Michael Apted; A Universal Picture.

Agee; A documentary by Ross Spears; James Agee Film Project.

Get Out Your Handkerchiefs; Directed by Bertrand Blier; New Line Cinema.

by Eric Shapearo

Is this a major movie, as most reviewers claim, bestowing upon it superlatives and awards? Or is it just the gnawing hunger for art movies, evident in a more demanding part of the American audience, which makes every picture that deviates from the current sleazy Hollywood cinematic formula look like an art movie?

At issue, in the form of literary/cinematic meditation, is a well-known European problem, endemic to the bulk of the European continent, where history has shuffled empires, nation-states and political entities within a relatively small geographic expanse. Struggles of a cultural nature, involving religions and ethnic allegiances, perennially have changed politically homogeneous kingdoms and realms into heterogeneous amalgams, and, in the process, have often bred ferocious clashes which—for nearly two millennia—have fostered irreconcilable conflicts between races and traditions. The end result was, and still is, a multitude of ethnic and national groups with badly split personalities. Since the time of Charlemagne, the Alsatians have never really known where they belong—France or Germany; the Tyroleans have never been able to decide whether they are Tyrolese; the Walloons, the Flemings, the Catalonians all suffer from an analogous affliction. And then there are the Kashubians—a tiny segment of northwestern Poles who inhabit the Pomeranian coast of the Baltic Sea, and who form the peasantry surrounding the old city of Gdansk (Danzig). The Kashubians are Catholic and Slavic, with strong ties to Polish history and custom, but they have been dominated politically by the Germans since the Middle Ages. The system of ethnic and cultural loyalties is thus an inevitable mess. Günter Grass is the son of a Kashubian mother; he even considers himself to be a Kashubian, hence *Der Blechtrommel (The Tin Drum)*, his most celebrated work, is a consummate exercise in ethnocultural schizophrenia. Indeed, the novel elevates national confusion to the status of an all-encompassing symbol. Human sufferings, the probe into the human condition in general, into the most intimate sensitivities and impulses, saturate Grass's narration, which, although boring, ponderous and heavy-handed, makes a cogent philosophical and historical point. Grass is a critic's writer: the more abstruse he appears, the more the critics declare him to be a genius, but no one could deny that his prose had a certain significance in the post-World War II *reglement des comptes.*

But the movie falls flat. Everything that, in the book, had local perspective and multidimensionality, in the film turns into a story of Germans and Poles interrelated by geography; the Kashubian dilemma somehow has been eviscerated from the general picture. The torment of contorted fidelities—the gist of the problem—is gone. The nazis are just murderous clowns; their knavish and fanatical simplemindedness, the source of their heinous crimes, passes unregistered. Gdansk (Danzig), an old, Hanseatic, northern European city with a haunting gothic and baroque beauty, gets neither fair nor imaginative treatment: it just makes a meager point among the visual components of the movie.

The motif of philosophic fantasy at the core of *The Tin Drum* is that Oscar, its kid hero, is so appalled by the primitive hypocrisy and stupidity of the adult world that he refuses to grow; he matures mentally practically as soon as he leaves his mother's womb, but he arrests his physical growth by conscious choice. He later joins a group of midgets, lilliputians and dwarfs who represent all possible civility, comity and sophistication; their ideological premise is that people who grow cannot be trusted. Therefore, they oppose and deride nazism and war; they profess a sort of spiritual independence from mankind's sins and blunders. In the novel, this metaphor is handled with caution. In the movie, it comes across in a somehow vapid fashion. When, at the end, Oscar—a victim of history and related human griefs—announces that he *will* grow *malgré tout,* and thus, finally, connects with humanity at large, his words sound like the dénouement of a TV medical series.

Mr. Grass has a peculiar obsession with abomination, which he apparently considers the best means to intimate

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and elucidate on the weirdness of existence. In this respect, Mr. Schlöndorff matches Grass perfectly. Like most German directors since the time of *Doctor Mabuse,* Schlöndorff believes that truth and aesthetic fulfillment lie with the lugubrious and the nauseating. He brings an abhorrent imagery to the screen: eels writhing in a dead horse's head, the death wish of Oscar's mother articulated in disgusting eating compulsions, a fascination with saliva. The sexual encounters are earmarked by a particular German expressionism of which Mr. Schlöndorff proves to be a master: the frequent on-screen matings are stylistically portrayed as a sort of St. Vitus' Dance, and are accompanied by audio effects that would make the celebrated Tarzan yell sound like a subdued whisper.

* * *

With *Foxes* one already feels persuaded, after watching half the movie, that what one sees on the screen is the end of Western civilization and any notion of normalcy as we have known them both—but then the movie suddenly begins to flash some signals of old-fashioned humanness. Till then, it was rather impossible to recognize the humanoids of the polyester Hollywood Gomorrah as people, or to establish any kinship with the freakish obtuseness and vulgarity that the Liberal Culture of the last two decades has bestowed upon them. But, unexpectedly, some kind of reflection starts to mark their brows. Throughout half of the movie, these characters inhabit a universe where things like emotional sensitivity, personal responsibility, human dignity seem to be incomprehensible sounds from another galaxy. All at once, though, the authors rush to give the humanoids—and the audience—mechanical, instant satisfaction. A good guy outsmarts the bad guys in a routine street chase. A hopelessly belated virgin (and an ugly duckling to boot) marries in a church and gets a wedding-rental sendoff (in spite of her having badly wronged her beau—but, after all, love forgives everything). A daughter finds out that she loves her mother (who is a neurotic failure) while the mother is utterly astonished that such a feeling even exists.

However, before all that happens, we have to wade through the smelly puddles of the California urban-behaviorial subculture of the late 70's, a foul reality of "liberation" and "spontaneity." In it, 15-year-old girls cannot remember how many lovers they have had; they are fed on Twinkies, pot, Cheetos, angel dust and Budweiser, and they tell their teachers that their parents get "paranoid" when informed about an offhand abortion, which, of course, proves the abysmal idiocy of parents.

Since the theaters that featured *Foxes* were filled mostly with teen-age girls, we may safely assume that the movie is this generation's *Little Women.* Forty-odd years ago, similar teen-age audiences shed tears when Katherine Hepburn, as Jo, tried to protect, or save, her sisters from illusions, sickness, romantic exaltation. Jeanie, the protagonist of *Foxes,* is a sort of Jo: at 15, she at least tries to rationalize the seediness of existence in her environment. But her efforts are doomed. Hepburn's Jo had society on her side. Jeanie, at the end, attempts to establish a truce between herself and her mother, but as we watch the society around them, we do not believe in the future of her attempt; the sudden optimism of the story line strikes us as phony. We leave the movie house with a nagging suspicion that a lot of cultural laundry must be done before good sense and authentic humanity can return to Hollywood Boulevard. There is no way to sustain a civilization from which notions of childhood and normalcy have been eviscerated. For millennia, teenagers have fornicated and destroyed their adolescence, but in the past such behavior took place within some fiduciary system of moral references to existential alternatives other than self-destruction. In the Hollywood of *Foxes,* promiscuity, boozing, vagrancy occur in a frightening , mind-boggling moral void. The paraphernalia of disintegration and vice are thus more important than aberrations of conduct, or even self-abuse. In this movie, people seem to live in a state of siege: their minds and consciousnesses seem so repressed by the ultimate valuelessness of their existence that they hardly qualify as coefficients of the human condition any longer.

* * *

Liberal Culture

Power

Penthouse International, the corporation which produces *Penthouse,* the second most important ideological organ of the American pornographic establishment, put $17 million into a motion picture entitled *Caligula.* The movie is loaded with prurient graphicness and sadistic violence, and it runs prestigiously on Third Avenue at an admission price of $7 each. It floats in a heavy gravy of gore, degeneracy and unnatural sex acts.

The film was recently brought to court on obscenity charges in Boston. A judge by the name of Harry Elam decided that the movie has political value and absolved Penthouse International from any sin. In his written verdict he added that the movie is socially redeeming because it shows how absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The liberal culture exerts an absolute power over our screens, our theaters, our courtrooms and judges. The rest is silence. □

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Being There wishes to be a metaphor, but it slips into caricature. The assertion that stupidity rules the world is not without merit, but as both an historical and social force, stupidity can come to prominence only through the existence of an antithetical force that is capable of taking advantage of stupid people who create doltish situations. Don Quixote's lack of a sense of reality which, actually, is dimwittedness at its best, makes him pay for his mental deficiency. The authors of *Being There* have no such subtlety of vision: their doleful retard moves in the ecology of morons—and instead of comedy, or at least satire, we have a sort of pseudo-*haute cuisine*-slapstick with smirking ambitions that pretend to something which never materializes on screen. While Candide suffered the consequences of his naiveté-cum-innocence, the protagonist of *Being There* collects fantastic rewards for his idiocy. And there is offered no dimension of some inherent factor in the affairs of this world which would not make us—the people in the audience—feel responsible for such an appalling arrangement. However, there is some merit to such a thought too: after all, we *have* paid for a ticket to see this demonstration of freak-curio-cinematic "philosophy." A little gracefulness in delineating the main motifs of the movie would help, but the authors seem to be incapable of infusing their work with an ounce of inspiration, lightness of touch or charm. They are even confused about whether the hero is an imbecile because he constantly watches TV, or if he constantly watches TV because he is an imbecile.

* * *

Coal Miner's Daughter consists of two familiar layers; only one contains simple, unassuming but fresh and startlingly subtle insights. These insights should have had better notice and more appreciation from both the reviewers and the public, as the very matter with which the director and the scriptwriter deal is by nature drab, and has been thoroughly exploited by all possible forms of artistic communication—from painting through prose and drama to manneristic ballads in all kinds of music. The hard work, misery and grimness of a dirt-poor miner's family in Kentucky coal country can be approached from two angles: proletarian revolutionary anger or school-book nationalism. Both are rather naive, sentimental and hackneyed, but rarely does one know, in letters or in visual arts, how to eschew them. The first part of this movie does exactly that: it conveys vignettes and delicate, pictorial touches of an impoverished, cramped, deprived existence which nevertheless encompasses a lot of humanness, decency, dignity, simple wisdom, moral sensitivity, even serenity. The attempt to put some smiles, warmth, existential colorfulness and individual chance for something better, richer, lighter into both the human and natural landscape is highly successful and makes Sissy Spacek, the heroine of the movie, both credible and engaging. A sort of latter-day anti-Hollywood nativism emanates from this picture, which is sort of surprising since it was shot by an English director—another proof that even American jingoism can be a cosmopolitan proposition.

The second part is a meager, if not downright cheap, rendition of an entertainer who is so wildly accepted by the public and so pampered by fate that she (the folk singer Loretta Lynn) breaks down under the burden of money and fame. The breakdown is never satisfactorily explained—is it character? destiny? circumstances? The ultimate reason, it seems, is the obnoxiousness of the American fan, that prototypical *homo Americanus*—indeed, a mindless and somewhat frightening creature who puzzles and repels social and cultural observers, but without whom the star system—so beneficial for Loretta—would collapse. An opportunity to explain, or illuminate, the nature and substance of American country music—its interrelationship with American urban music, so triumphant in modern culture on a global scale—has been forsaken. That's a pity; much could have been said about small-town music in cities that are not necessarily small, but which have a smallness, or parochiality, that recreates itself into sui generis bigness in its own right—of which Nashville is the prime example.

* * *

As the title indicates, *Agee* is about James Agee, a literary and creative meteorite—poet, novelist, journalist, critic and scriptwriter. In fact, Agee, who died in 1955 at the age of 45, might have been one of the not-so-few cultural activists who, during our century, looked for and attempted to work out a functional synthesis of art and technology, literature and movie-making, by involving previously disparate forms of creation with one another. Mr. Spears's movie, obviously a fruit of his love for Agee himself, as well as for his artistic expression, renders justice to both. Agee's fine sense of his time and of larger meanings of existence, his feeling for the miseries of life, his nondoctrinaire populism come across untainted by a "message"—unless we consider Mr. Spears's unabashed love for his protagonist a message in itself.

Agee is a good case for the possibilities of the documentary as a film genre. The fact that it will be screened only at universities, or—as an acme of success—in the New York Metropolitan Art Museum and Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center, proves how little this kind of picture is appreciated. Which is a pity.

* * *

Get Out Your Handkerchiefs, like most French literature, drama and, consequently, film, is suffused with that uniquely French penchant for endless debate, for spinning a never-ending discourse, dilettantish in nature. Thus,

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rail workers discuss Hegel between one *un blanc* and another, shop girls speak endlessly about biology, and sub-teen boys ponder womanhood and the raptures of carnality. And everything makes some sense—more or less. *Handkerchiefs* is a fugue on modern French permissiveness: in fact, nothing much has changed with the French in the realm of erotica and its complexity; there are just more four-letter words than in the past, and they are now turned loose *ad nauseam.* The movie is bizarre, grotesque and baroque for the sake of laughs, but underlying the grotesquery is a sort of shoddy wisdom: men do not know a thing about women, women know even less about themselves because they are so much less knowledgeable than men, and 13-year-old boys can be damned manipulative in order to engage in their first sexual experience. Thereby, the French contribution to the new wave of modish sexual explicitness in movies introduces a motif of intriguing perversity, which can be easily discounted as unserious and offbeat—but which, actually, possesses a quality of disturbing insight that still can be found in Europe. □

Correspondence

Letter from Canada: Shakespeare & Gay in Stratford, Ontario

by Gary Vasilash

Twenty-eight years ago, Sir Alec Guinness trod the stage in a small western Ontario farming community. The play was *Richard III.* The stage was in a tent. Since that time, every play in Shakespeare's canon has been performed in that town at least once, and this is to say nothing of works by writers from Sophocles to Beckett. The first year 68,000 attended; last year more than 500,000 came. The Stratford Festival is a curiosity: some of the best actors in the world go there each year to perform in the world's classics. The drive west from Toronto or east from Detroit is, for the most part, through farm land. There are cows in fields up to the town limits, and the architecture in the town is from the Second Eclectic period (1880-1930)—the Gothic and Romanesque revival. The whole setting is not what would be expected for such an important stage. Perhaps that's why the actors go there. But whatever the case, here are some comments—or "paper bullets of the brain," as Benedick might put it—about four of the Festival's June openings: *The Beggar's Opera* (at the Avon Theatre), *Titus Andronicus, Twelfth Night,* and *Much Ado About Nothing* (at the Festival Theatre).

With friends like Swift, Pope and Arbuthnot, there can be little wonder that John Gay was able to make *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) a powerful satire that has probably as many targets for its barbs of wit as that founding member of the Scriblerus Club was able to pack into it—and still make some money, as his life was full of misfortunes, such as a political post lost due to the death of Queen Anne and a fortune lost due to the South Sea Bubble. Targets include: Sir Robert Walpole, a favorite victim (q.v., the rope dancing in *Gulliver's Travels*); the opera form, which was becoming popular at that time; and the concept of the lower classes of society being constantly full of joy, a theme which Gay dealt with in *The Shepards Week,* which mocked the conventions of pastoral poetry. However, the work is timeless: a viewer can watch the Stratford Festival's presentation at the Avon Theatre, not be aware of Gay's aims, and still find it delightful. The exposure of so-called manners and morals (or more precisely, the lack of them) in a farcical manner will always be funny, and the actors and actresses, singers and dancers at the Avon are up to Gay's pen.

Brecht took the *Opera* and transformed it into *The Threepenny Opera* (1928). The thieves and whores of Gay's version become the oppressed proletariat. Could the recent Brecht/Weill revival have something to do with the staging at Stratford? Happily, directors Robin Phillips and Gregory Peterson have left the play in the realm of Gay. However, there are some modern touches. In the prologue, ostensibly about Walpole, one hears the Stratford Youth Choir (a group, incidentally, which really makes the production) sing a reference to Ayatollah Khomeini. Many of the musical arrangements have been updated by Berthold Carriere: melodies from "White Christmas" to "The Wizard of Oz," and jazz rhythms and appropriate choreography abound. But purists, take heart: those changes are the most notable departures from Gay; the costumes, setting and text are faithful to the original. Could Phillips and Peterson have taken Gay's approach and put as much of the 18th century into it as possible, while remembering that a completely straight piece might not make money in 1980?

Dr. Johnson did not have too high an opinion of actors. When Boswell asked him why he didn't mention David Garrick in his *Preface* to Shakespeare, Johnson answered, in part, "I would not disgrace my page with a player . . . He has not made Shakespeare better known." It must be recalled that Garrick was one of the foremost Shakespearean actors and producers of his day, and a former student of Johnson's, and that they made their initial journey (i.e., into the World) from Lichfield to London together in 1737. I suspect that today the player is more important

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than the Bard. How many are going to see *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Festival Theatre because Shakespeare wrote it? How many filled the house because Maggie Smith portrayed Beatrice? Moreover, in *Much Ado,* Hero "dies" because her virtue is besmirched by her betrothed. None of the characters think the cause of death odd. Who can imagine a young woman dying of a false accusation like that today? Many a one in a like situation would answer: "It's none of your goddamn business if I was on my balcony last night! And if I was, what's it to you?"

A comment that Johnson did make in his *Preface:* "A play read affects the mind like a play acted." The performances of *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado About Nothing* bring that dictum to the bar of question. Granted, the reader of the play, thanks to footnotes, will find out what Shakespeare's topical comments refer to. That certainly brings a degree of clarity to the mind and enriches the experience. But two actors in the plays do such tremendous jobs that the mind is affected in a way that words can't—on their own—accomplish. Rich McMillan as Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night* is a caricature come to life: pop-eyes, an expression that can only be called goofy, and purple-colored clothes that would make Sir Fopling Flutter sigh—he is more vivid than a picture in the mind's eye, and his high voice and giggle enhance it. Brian Bedford (an overlooked talent, but not at Stratford, where he has been part of the Company since 1975) plays the Puritan with the lemon-sucking expression, Malvolio, in *Twelfth Night* and the quick-witted and sometimes vitriolic Benedick in *Much Ado.* He does two things that the mind can't readily do for itself: he plays to the audience, addressing them in asides as I'm sure Shakespeare intended his characters to, and smiling and raising his eyebrows as needed; and he has brilliant comedic timing—he groups and patterns his words, then executes them so that even if the listener doesn't know what Bedford is saying (e.g., when Shakespeare is chasing down a quibble), how he says it completes the picture. The only writer who effectively approached these two areas in print is Laurence Sterne.

The audience for *Titus Andronicus* on a Friday night performance was much smaller than I expected. Although not one of Shakespeare's better-known plays—nor one of his better ones, period—William Hutt, a veteran actor and director with the Company (he was there when it was formed in 1953), headed the cast, and that alone should have filled more seats. *Titus* should become one of the more widely performed plays—or be made into a movie or TV miniseries. After all, the play opens with two dead bodies, which are followed by: a sacrifice; a father killing his son; another murder; a rape and mutilation; two executions; another murder; a hanging; two throat-cuttings; cannibalism; and four quick stabbing deaths. Not only did the Elizabethans eat such fare with great relish, but so do the people of today. How else can the popularity of such things as the film *Halloween,* the horror novels of Stephen King, and TV's "Dallas" be explained?

Titus Andronicus is a Roman; Tamora is queen of the Goths. *Much Ado* is set in Messina, Sicily. The setting of *Twelfth Night* is Illyria, which is now the coast of Yugoslavia. The actors and actresses (except in rare cases) sound substantially natural. Can those who argue against phony accents in films (e.g., the peasants in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* and other films sound like grunting semimorons while the leads sound weaned on a book on elocution) find a better precedent than Shakespeare?

* * *

Two comments overheard from a group of "senior citizens" after a well-done presentation of *Twelfth Night.* "Oh, so *that's* Shakespeare!" (Read a sneering disappointment.) "If that was on TV, I'd change the channel." Members of the group argued with the usher near the end of the 15-minute interval: they wanted to chew on their ice cream sandwiches during the show. They were quite bitchy about it. □

The American Proscenium

Carter & Carter

By now, the story has been told and retold, and both Mr. James Carter, the president of the United States, and Mr. William Carter, his brother, have well-assigned roles in contemporary affairs. Even the most simple-minded citizen of this republic must have realized by now that Mr. William Carter was paid a substantial amount of money by a foreign government rather unfriendly to America for services that have not been clearly and fully explained to the American public. And even the most benign observers must have reached the conclusion that those payments, or financial rewards, were not lavished upon Mr. William Carter in gratitude for his awesome intellectual contribution to mankind, or in recognition of his beauty of body or character.

In his public analysis, President Carter expressed a view that "everybody knows you can't push Billy around." This is a puzzling arrogation, and even the strictest constructionist and the most ardent worshiper of civil rights must feel impelled to ask: Why? After all, we are dealing here with matters that affect the welfare of this nation. Are we supposed to think—knowing Mr. William Carter's lack of consideration for anything other than his own financial prosperity—that if a more generous offer comes from other quarters, say the Kremlin, we won't be able to push him around a bit? We, as a free nation?

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Conventions

Having watched on television both the Republicans and the Democrats at their conventions, we feel more perplexed than ever about one particular matter—who are the American people? At both gatherings, "people" seemed to be the most frequently used noun, easily beating "liberty" and "party." Our discomfiture, thus, begins with the question: Where were the American people—in Detroit or in New York? The natural answer would appear to be: in both places. But at both conventions the ebullient orators adamantly insisted that only their party represented the people. The sight of the delegates themselves confounded us even more: the two groups were quite different, visually, and if one assemblage was the people, then the other, in all likelihood, was not.

The GOP is routinely characterized by the newspapers as the party of wealth, the financial establishment, bankers, corporate executives, plutocracy and country clubs. However, the convention in Detroit was replete with farmers' hands and faces, grocers' grins and a small-town-artisan sort of affluence amassed through a lifetime of hard work. The ungainliness of those who are simple but not poor was very much in evidence. Republicans and their women were mostly sturdy and thick-set, clad in J.C. Penney double knit, K-Mart hosiery, Sears polyester and white patent leather loafers with (or without) tassels. So, as Senator Kennedy, at the Democratic convention, invoked the Jacksonian democracy as his cherished heritage, we're sorry to be too picky in this respect, but the merchants, laborers, mechanics and backwoodsmen seemed to us to have feasted ideologically in Detroit.

Democrats in Manhattan's Madison Square Garden looked to us as if they all had been bussed from federal offices and National Education Association meetings. Many faces seemed to belong to labor-union managers, rather than members. They busily intermingled with a large troop of Harvard/Yale-type faces, very suburban and very Waspish, and with the black-intelligentsia faces which were in abundant supply. A lavish sprinkling of modishly curly heads from the ready-to-wear disco-intellectual complex was very much in sight. Democratic women seemed much more polished than their Republican counterparts, but their natural charms were marred by expressions of grim determination in defense of this or another cause. They wouldn't dream of wearing chain-store fashions: their apparel was neatly divided into three categories—grandma's simplicity from a respectable boutique, Lord & Taylor - Bloomingdale's - Alexander's axis, and blue-denim cum T-shirt feminist chic.

Somehow, the rhetoric reflected the dichotomy. Senator Kennedy bitterly scolded Ronald Reagan for demagoguery because he quoted Roosevelt in his acceptance speech. But later, he shed tears on behalf of the Iowa farmer who, after a life of toil and dedication to this country's alimentation, could not even leave his farm to his children. He conveniently forgot to add that the inheritance-tax legislation originated in Senator Kennedy's own liberal philosophy and in Democratic politics. If this is not demagoguery, we don't know what is.

In Detroit, the people were obviously concerned with how they wanted to live. In New York, everybody seemed to be concerned with telling *other* people how *they* should live. These attitudes were somehow reflected in the whole gamut of so-called issues. The American hostages in Iran—the ultimate example of our powerlessness and bungling—were constantly present in Detroit and conspicuously absent in New York, although their plight can be laid at the feet of the Democratic administration. Even the Secretary of State, a prominent Democrat and a man of highly extolled integrity, did not commit the unpardonable mistake of mentioning *that* issue.

It is with mixed feelings that we put the 1980 conventions behind us. They certainly reinforced our conviction that it's easy, noble and rewarding to preach public charity, compassion, brotherhood; one is so loved when he is on the side of progress, justice, human needs. And we were reminded that it's much more difficult to speak of self-reliance, realism, responsibility; few applaud him who asks questions like: What kind of progress? At what price? Justice for whom? (CC)

Reorientation

In *The New Republic,* a journal of opinion which for decades advocated redistributive justice, and only recently could be considered an organ of self-scrutinizing liberals, we can read these days:

> The existence of large corporations is mostly good, not bad . . . . Capitalism's accomplishments, which we salute . . .

These are commendable words, full of freshly acquired dignity of thought; they imbue us with plenty of hope for the future. But wait, here is another bouquet of sentences that perfumed our minds with serendipitous pleasure:

> Nationalism remains a heroic ideal . . . . Only in the West are the ideals of heroism, vitality, and nationalism discredited; and in distrusting the nobility of the 1914 generation's ideas, something more than patriotism has perished. What perished was not only the ideal of heroic action but a belief in the importance of ideas.

Where does one read, nowadays, sentences so pregnant with ancient and precious wisdom? Nowhere else than in the *New York Review of Books,* the respectable organ of those who, in the 60's, instructed American youth in the manufacture of the Molotov cocktails used to destroy the vestiges of American nationalism, social cohesiveness, the ideals of heroism and vitality, and the importance of ideas. □

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